

AN ANALYSIS OF THE  
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN  
ANTI-COMMUNISM AND  
SEGREGATIONIST THOUGHT IN THE  
DEEP SOUTH, 1948-1964.

CLARK, WAYNE ADDISON  
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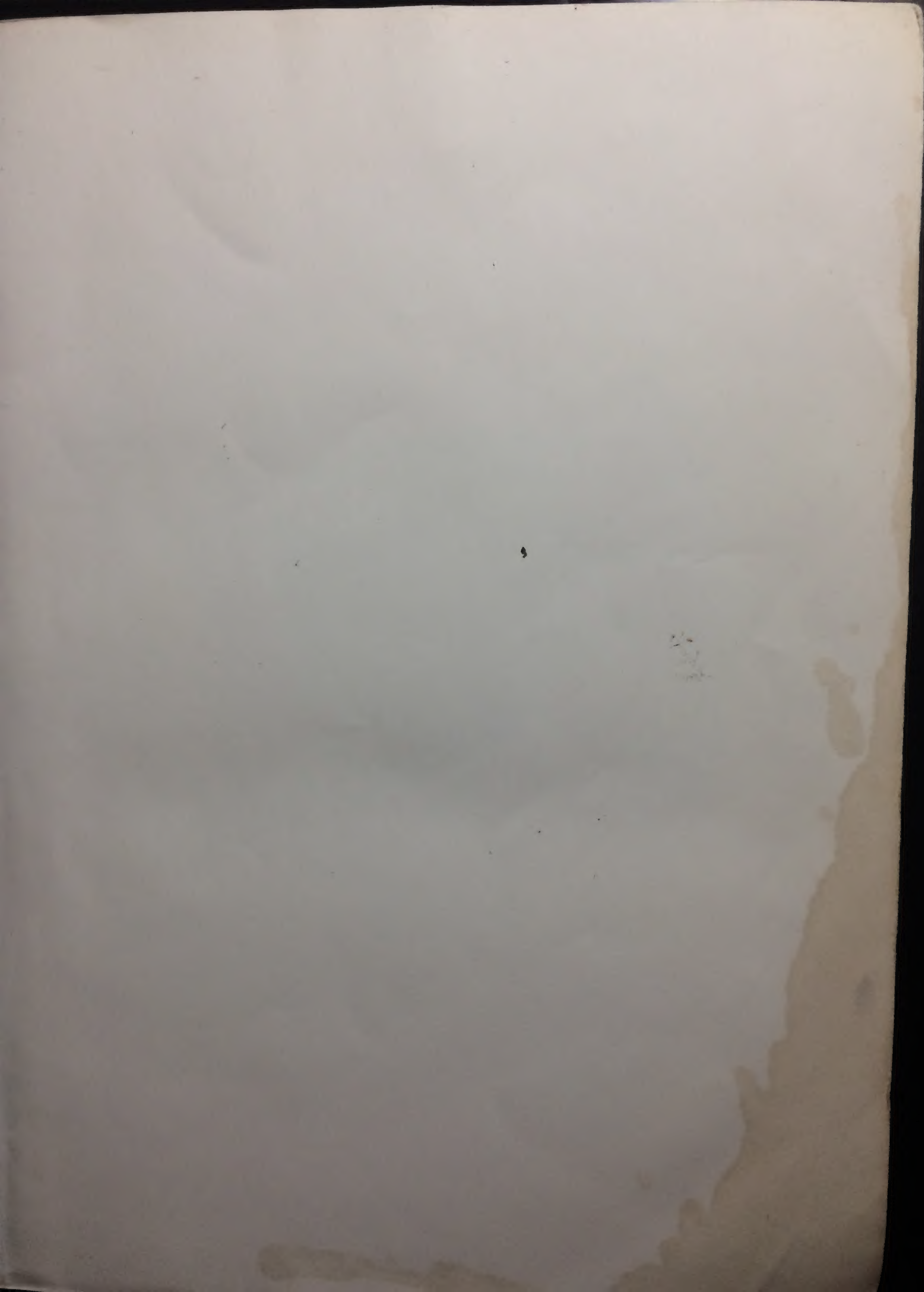
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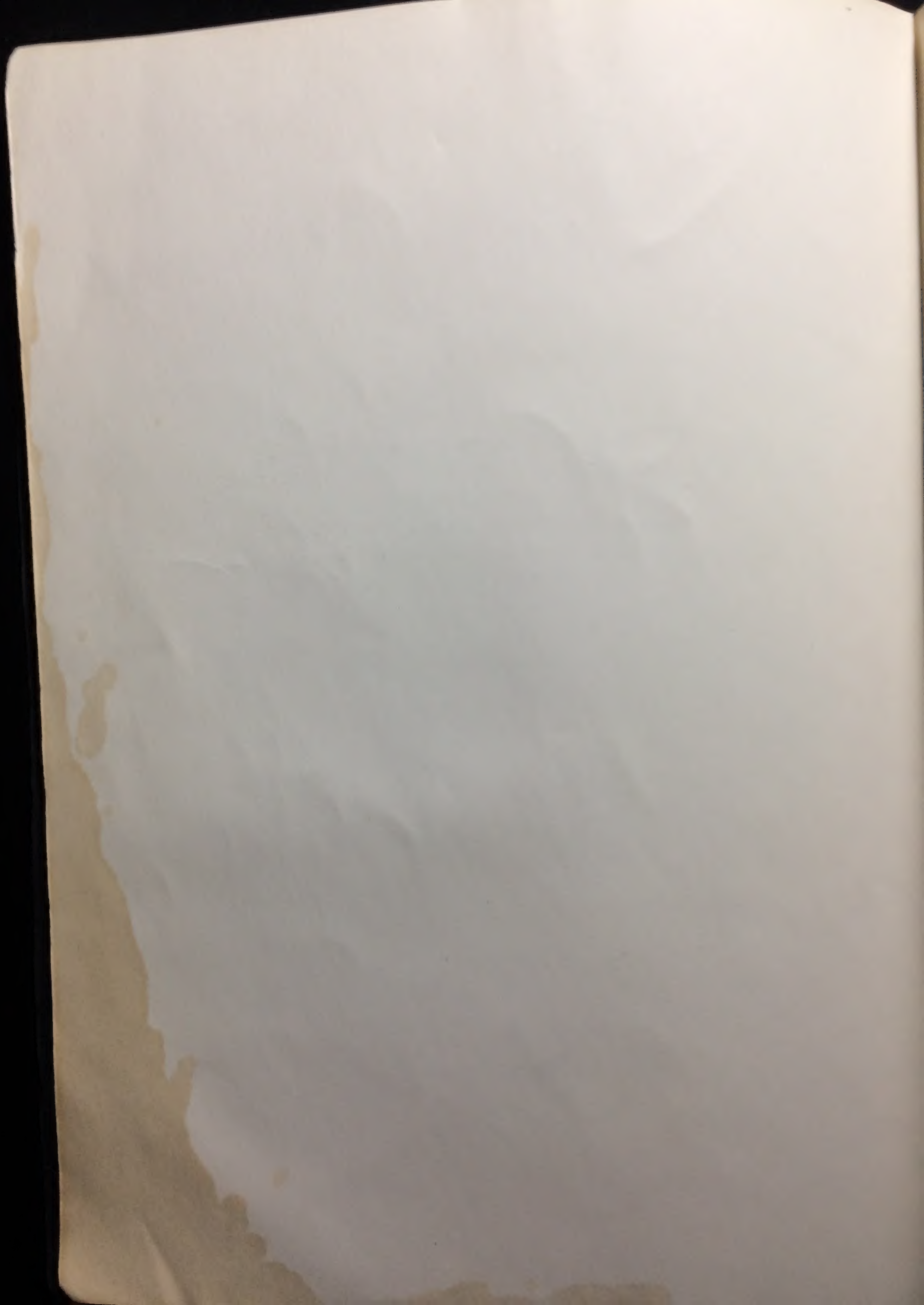














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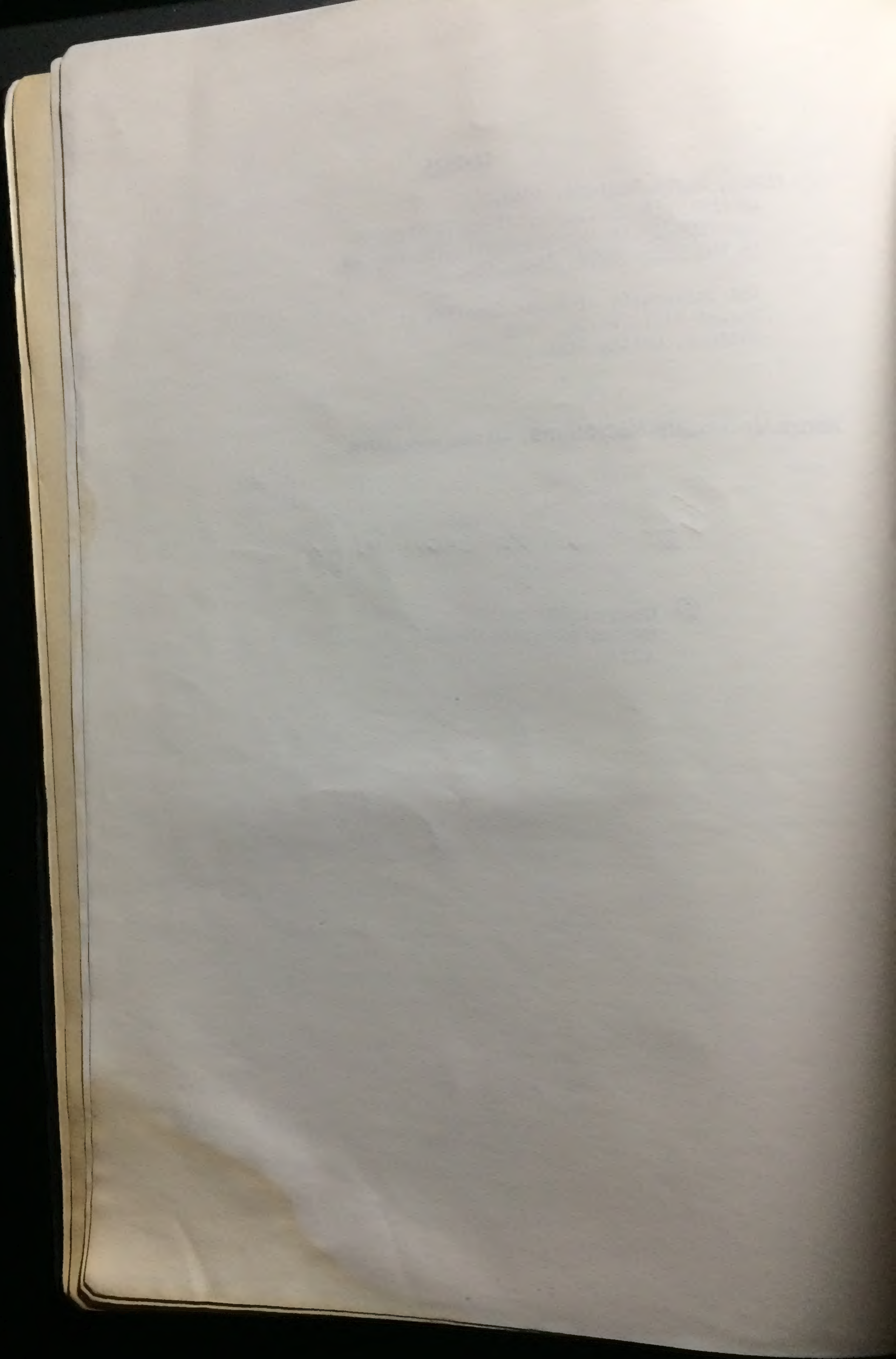
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AN ANALYSIS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ANTI-COMMUNISM  
AND SEGREGATIONIST THOUGHT IN THE  
DEEP SOUTH, 1948-1964

by

Wayne Addison Clark

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A Dissertation submitted to the faculty  
of the University of North Carolina in  
partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
in the Department of History

Chapel Hill

1976

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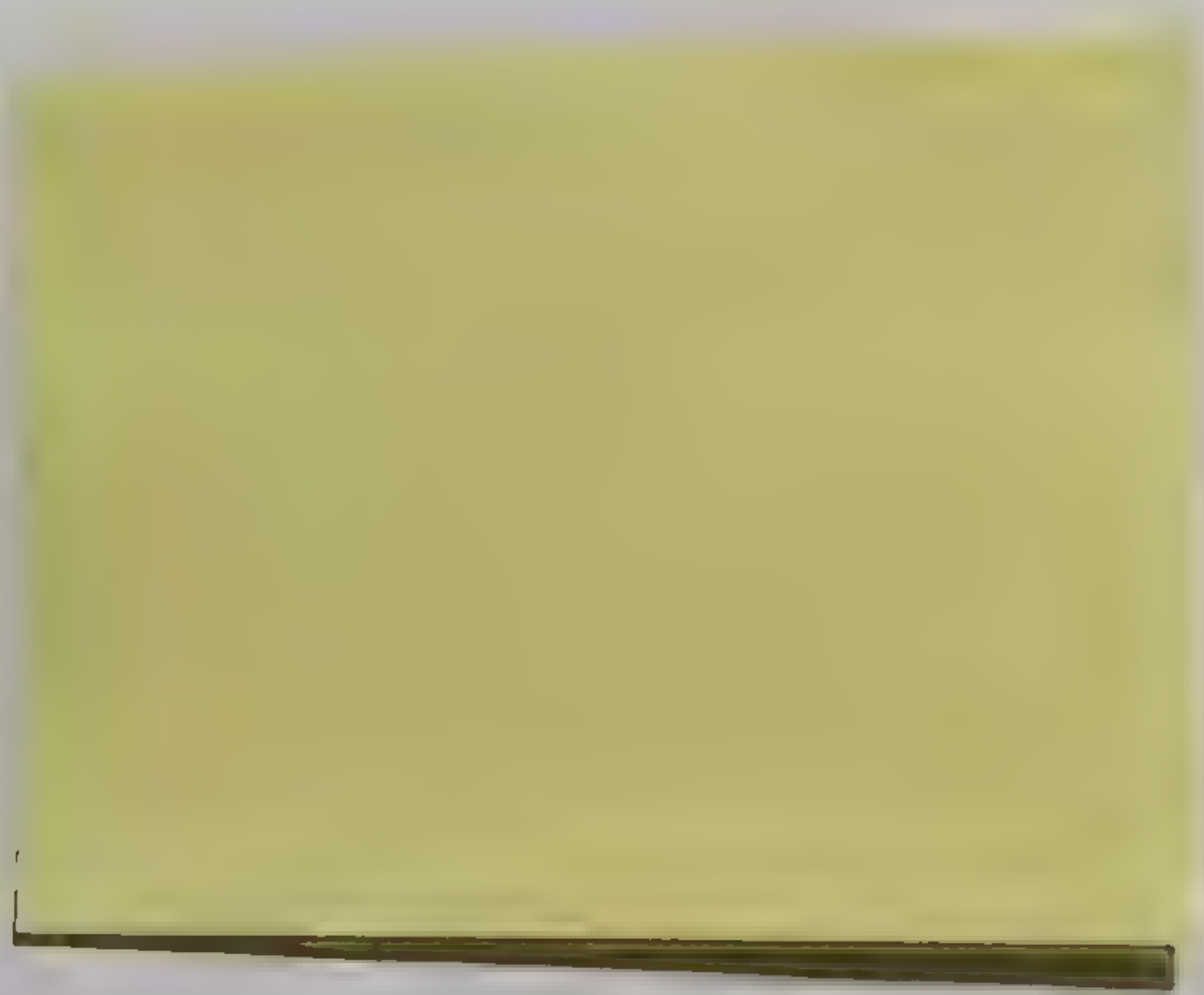
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WAYNE A. CLARK. An Analysis of the Relationship Between Anti-Communism and Segregationist Thought in the Deep South, 1948-1964. (Under the direction of GEORGE E. MOWRY.)

The years 1948 to 1964 were marked by highly strained relations between the United States and the Soviet Union. This period was also characterized by radical alterations in the relations between whites and blacks in the Deep South. There the cold war, unfolding concurrently with the civil rights movement, affected political and social attitudes in a singular manner. This paper attempts to demonstrate the extent to which these two events became associated in the political thought and rhetoric of southern whites, particularly those in positions of leadership. The white elite systematically related a virulent anti-communism with a dedication to the preservation of white supremacy. The result was a popular ideology that served as the basis for massive resistance to racial integration and for the repression of political and social dissent.

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Although a distinctly southern social and historical perspective comprised the basis, policies adopted by the federal government provided the immediate catalyst for the widespread acceptance of this particular variant of political fundamentalism. In the late 1940's, the Truman administration made a modest effort to modify the more egregious abuses resulting from racial subjugation in the South. Those whites most threatened by federal intervention reacted

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immediately by forming the State's Rights party in 1948. Their primary goals were to unite public opinion against federal intervention and organize resistance to racial change through collective political action. The State's Rights party laid the ground work for the growth of the White Citizens Councils and the John Birch Society whose respective goals were to preserve racial segregation and fight communism.

These organizations, following the example of House and Senate investigating committees, promoted a variation of McCarthyism designed to fit the specific needs of the white South. Attempting to minimize dissent, the political elite demanded racial and political conformity from religious leaders, labor officials, and educators. Those who supported racial equality were denounced as communists or communist dupes. This tactic prevented many individuals from breaking with the prevailing consensus. The strongest charges were directed at individuals and groups directly involved in the civil rights movement. Throughout this period white leadership attempted to discredit and obstruct their goals. The protracted nature of the civil rights struggle was, in part, the result of the elite's success in associating racial change with conspiracy and subversion.



#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Professors George E. Mowry and Joel Williamson of the University of North Carolina and Professor Vivian Fisher of Wofford College for their contributions to this paper. Page Crosland and Elaine Gilliard of the Southern Regional Council provided valuable editorial assistance.



Anti-communism as an ideology was a response not only to stalemate abroad, but also to the insecurities of life at home, where traditional values had been uprooted. To those whose sense of security had been destroyed by the extreme mobility of American life, who felt threatened by the demands of racial minorities for equality, and who were humiliated by the impersonality of an increasingly bureaucratized society, ideological anti-communism served as a focal point of discontent. It could not allay these anxieties, but it could explain them in a form that was acceptable to those who saw as many enemies within the gates as they did outside.

--Ronald Steel  
Pax Americana,  
p. 25



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## INTRODUCTION

The years 1948 to 1964 were marked by highly strained relations between the United States and the Soviet Union. This period was also characterized by radical alterations in the relations between whites and blacks in the Deep South. There the cold war, unfolding concurrently with the civil rights movement, affected political and social attitudes in a singular manner. This paper attempts to demonstrate the extent to which the two issues became associated in the political thought and rhetoric of southern whites, particularly those in positions of leadership. By 1955, these leaders had systematically related a virulent anti-communism with a dedication to the preservation of white supremacy. The result was a popular ideology that served as the basis for massive resistance to racial integration and for the repression of political and social dissent.

This particular ideological perspective was a variant of religious fundamentalism in that it was characterized by a transference of the concepts of absolute morality and righteousness from the religious to the political realm. For many southern whites, racial politics assumed distinct religious overtones and served as the secular counterpart of the eternal theological struggle between the forces of absolute



good and those of absolute evil. At the heart of this ideology were two basic elements--a commitment to white supremacy and a confused but dedicated anti-communism. Neither concept was new to whites in the Deep South. However, the two sociopolitical perspectives together formed a political frame of reference unique to this particular period and place. A significant majority of whites unequivocally accepted the idea that they were involved in a holy crusade against the combined onslaught of communists and racial integrationists. Stated in simplest terms, their political beliefs had reached the point where they made few, if any, distinctions between opposing internal communist subversion and opposing alterations in the racial status quo. They viewed communism and racial integration as the absolute evils that collectively threatened their economic and social values--indeed, as they often stated, their very way of life. Their beliefs were further characterized by:

1. an assumption that racial problems could be solved if conspirators and integrationists did not interfere;
2. a rejection of the patriotism and good will of individuals supporting racial change, particularly leaders of churches, labor unions, and educational institutions; and
3. an advocacy of united efforts to resist the conspiracy through organization, propaganda, economic coercion, intimidation, and, at times, violence.



To a considerable extent, the politics of southern whites grew naturally out of a rigid caste system operating within a highly valued capitalist economic order. However, the single most important factor in promoting the segregationist, anti-communist concept to the level of a consensus was the ability of political leaders to manipulate public opinion by playing on the fears and prejudices of their constituents. In so doing, the political elite maintained as its ultimate goal the preservation of its vested political and economic interests.<sup>1</sup>

The historical precedents for the popular ideology that emerged in the early 1950's can be found in the strong southern reaction to abolitionist agitation in the ante-bellum period and in the traditional hostilities towards foreign ideologies, particularly any form of collectivism. The widespread acceptance of a pro-slavery ideology in the ante-bellum South affected southern thought and attitudes long after the Civil War ended; whites had devised an elaborate defense of their social and political system that military defeat alone could not weaken. Although few defended the virtues of the slave system after the war, the political

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<sup>1</sup>Harold D. Lasswell has defined political elite as follows: "The political elite comprises the power holders of a body politic. The power holders include the leadership and the social formations from which leaders typically come, and to which accountability is maintained, during a given generation. In other words, the political elite is the top power class." See Harold D. Lasswell, Daniel Lerner, and Rothwell C. Easton, The Comparative Study of Elites (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1952), p. 13.



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leadership shifted the emphasis to certain modified corollaries of the pro-slavery ideology. One of the most enduring, and consequently one of the most important, was the idea that whites possessed a unique understanding of the needs of blacks and that those needs were best served under a social and political system based on racial subordination and one free from outside influence or control. Whites defended their "right" to exercise control over black behavioral patterns as aggressively under the caste system as they had under the slave system. External influences or authorities that questioned or attempted to modify this control encountered intense opposition--opposition that characterized any suggestion of interference as alien, conspiratorial, or even diabolical.

In such an atmosphere, race relations deteriorated and mistrust, fear, and violence remained as commonplace under the prevailing system of subordination and segregation as under slavery. Efforts by the populists toward the end of the century to reconcile the races and develop a political alliance between them were doomed to failure. Although Populism was a short-lived and relatively ineffectual movement, it contributed to a sense of alarm among influential whites which led them to strengthen the legal basis of their caste system through the enactment of numerous Jim Crow laws.<sup>2</sup> White leaders took measures to disfranchise blacks,

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<sup>2</sup>C. Vann Woodward, The Strange Career of Jim Crow (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), Chapter Three.



insuring their political impotence. As a consequence, the political and social subordination of blacks to whites became more firmly established by 1900 than at any time since the Civil War.

The progressive movement's efforts to reform various aspects of American life largely ignored race relations and, in effect, supported the status quo in that area.<sup>3</sup> Realizing the need for a more direct and forceful approach to resisting institutional racism, a small interracial group organized the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in 1909.<sup>4</sup> Working primarily through the courts, the organization aimed at nothing less than the total elimination of the legal framework supporting racial segregation. Thus, the NAACP confronted the white power structure with a serious challenge to the caste system, questioning its legal and moral right to exist at a time when white supremacy had recently become fully consolidated as a way of life.

Subsequent events caused whites to believe their system had fallen victim to subversive forces bent on inflaming racial hatred and fomenting social revolution. The red scare of 1919 proved to be the most salient of these events.

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 90-93. For a more detailed assessment see Dewey W. Grantham, Jr., "The Progressive Movement and the Negro," South Atlantic Quarterly, LIV (October, 1955), 461-77.

<sup>4</sup>August Meier, Negro Thought in America (Ann Arbor, Mich.: The University of Michigan Press, 1966), pp. 182-83.



As in the rest of the nation, the political atmosphere in the South was characterized by xenophobia, hostility toward organized labor, and hatred for radicals. But whites there generally displayed an additional trait less obvious among other Americans. They viewed outspoken black leaders and other individuals and groups working to promote racial change with fear, suspicion, and hostility.

Efforts by labor unions to organize southern blacks proved particularly influential in shaping white attitudes towards racial change. In 1917, the United Mine Workers (UMW) union attempted to organize black and white Alabama miners.<sup>5</sup> Initially, the union encountered hostile propaganda campaigns led by business leaders who wanted to convince the public that a strike would be unpatriotic. In addition to questioning the loyalty of the union, the companies, by 1919, accused the UMW "of associating the black man on terms of perfect equality with the white man," and stressed the fact that union members were under oath not to discriminate against fellow workers.<sup>6</sup> Horace R. Cayton and George S. Mitchell in their study of unions and black workers conclude that the coal operators believed that by arousing racial prejudices they could rely on public opinion to help them defeat unionism.<sup>7</sup> The unions met similar reactions

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<sup>5</sup>Horace R. Cayton and George S. Mitchell, Black Workers and the New Unions (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1939), p. 318.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 320.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.



throughout the region.

Unionism, radicalism, and racial agitation emerged as three of the key elements in the social and political views of many whites during this period. This outlook partially resulted from actions of the only labor group that posed a real, although limited, threat to the racial status quo, the International Workers of the World (IWW). The union's constitution expressly forbade discrimination against black members.<sup>8</sup> Since its inception in 1905, the IWW frequently had been cited as a source of racial agitation. The wobblies made no secret of the fact that their ultimate aim was to organize black workers for political purposes, a goal that did not go unnoticed among whites. But the wobblies failed to serve as a catalyst for a black revolutionary movement. By 1919, the IWW was weakened considerably from a loss of leadership and from the time and expense expended in legal defense.<sup>9</sup> Yet hostility towards the wobblies, and radicals in general, reached new levels of intensity. One, not atypical, editorial stated:

The IWW, the Social Revolutionists and all their allies of anarchism and radical socialism are public enemies and outlaws. They should be hunted down, all who are guilty of treason hanged by swift action of the law, and those who have trodden

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<sup>8</sup> Sterling D. Spero and Abram L. Harris, The Black Worker (New York: Columbia University Press, 1931), p. 330.

<sup>9</sup> Wilson Record, The Negro and the Communist Party (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1951), pp. 10-12. Also see John S. Gambs, The Decline of the I.W.W. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1932), p. 41.



however timidly toward treason expelled from the land. If emergency legislation is needed to speed the machinery of justice, Congress should give the legislation, and if martial law is needed in regions infested by the Reds, then for martial law we should provide. The 'Reds' are not Americans, no matter under what names they masquerade.<sup>10</sup>

Clearly, whites in the South, like many other Americans at this time, believed their way of life was endangered by groups and organizations such as the IWW and the Communist party.<sup>11</sup> Yet, the main factor in the attitudes of most southern whites during the red scare appeared not to be an explicit fear of radicalism or communism per se. Rather, the important feature distinguishing their fears from those of other Americans was the exaggerated belief in the ability of radicals to exploit the racial oppression under which most blacks lived. Whites sensed that race supremacy as a social and political system was vulnerable, although they generally refused to acknowledge that blacks might be dissatisfied living under such a system. Consequently, businessmen, clergymen, newspapermen, and politicians responded quickly and vigorously to the slightest indication that

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<sup>10</sup> New Orleans Times-Picayune, November 13, 1919.

<sup>11</sup> I. W. Newby has suggested that the Russian Revolution of 1917 "injected a new element into segregationist thought" by providing white southerners "with an explanation which completely absolved themselves of blame." See I. W. Newby, ed., The Development of Segregationist Thought (Homewood, Ill.: The Dorsey Press, 1968), p. 113. Perhaps a more important result of the revolution was the tendency on the part of the white South to view communists and radicals in general as the new abolitionists bent on disrupting southern society and creating dissatisfaction and rebellion among native blacks.



outsiders were attempting to modify or alter in any way the status of blacks.

Of all the whites who attacked radicals, communists, and other agitators, Congressman James F. Byrnes of South Carolina perhaps best represented the socio-racial views of the political elite in the Deep South. Byrnes expressed a particular hostility toward the more outspoken black leaders whom he claimed had challenged successfully the conservative black leadership that followed the doctrines of Booker T. Washington. He specifically cited William M. Trotter of the Boston Guardian, William Bridges of Challenge, and A. Philip Randolph and Chandler Owen of the Messenger as examples of militants who were encouraging blacks to resort to violence. In a speech before the U.S. House of Representatives, the South Carolina legislator charged that the Messenger was controlled by alien forces bent on fomenting rebellion. Byrnes stated:

The material in the magazine would indicate that the source from which the support comes is antagonistic to the Government of the United States. It appeals for the establishment in this country of a Soviet Government. . . . It urges the negro to join the I.W.W.'s [sic], pays tribute to Eugene Debs and every other convicted enemy of the Government, and prays for the establishment of a Bolsheviki Government in this land. It is evident that the I.W.W.'s [sic] are financing it in an effort to have the negro of America join them in their revolutionary plans.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Congressional Record, 66th Cong., 1st sess., Volume 58, Part V, August 25-September 12, 1919, pp. 4303-4305. Also see The New York Times, August 26, 1919.



Showing an uncharacteristic disregard for states' rights, Byrnes urged the federal government to take immediate action against the writers of these magazines by enacting a law providing for censorship of materials circulated by mail. He clearly feared the possibility that blacks would be influenced by and give support to leaders such as Randolph in an attempt to improve their political and social position vis-à-vis the whites. Byrnes inadvertently admitted that blacks were susceptible to the urgings of those calling for a change in relations.

[The southern Negro] is happy and contented and will remain so if the propagandist of the I.W.W., the Bolshevik of Russia, and the misguided theorist of other sections of the country will let [sic] him alone. . . . Neither political equality nor social equality is essential to the happiness of the negro. This is a white man's country, and will always remain a white man's country.<sup>13</sup>

Nonetheless, Byrnes and other members of the elite exaggerated the threat from radicals and promoted the idea of incipient black rebellion. Thus, they created an atmosphere in which social and political reform efforts could not survive. They were aided by the manner in which the Russian Revolution and bolshevism were portrayed by the United States government. Hearings on conditions in the Soviet Union, held by a U.S. Senate investigating subcommittee, received considerable publicity and helped shape white attitudes towards domestic subversion. The hearings pictured

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid.



the new Soviet government as bent on completely uprooting a civilized way of life.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, the Justice Department, under Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer and his deputy J. Edgar Hoover, prosecuted hundreds of individuals and deported numerous radicals who allegedly were conspiring to undermine American society.<sup>15</sup> Thus, as a partial consequence of actions taken by the United States government, southern political leaders convincingly portrayed the Soviet Union's sympathizers and radicals in general as the most important sources of racial tensions.

Certain radical elements did make limited and usually ineffectual efforts to identify with the plight of blacks and enlist their support. American communists viewed black people as a political asset, believing them indispensable to creating a revolutionary climate in the United States.<sup>16</sup> Thus, party organizers were feared by whites because they were suspected not only of creating unrest among blacks but of formulating plans for insurrections. However, the party was too weak and disorganized to present a serious challenge

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<sup>14</sup> Frederick Lewis Schuman, American Policy Towards Russia Since 1917 (New York: International Publishers, 1928), p. 124.

<sup>15</sup> For accounts of the raids, prosecutions, and deportations see Robert K. Murray's Red Scare (Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minnesota Press, 1955), and Robert W. Dunn, ed., The Palmer Raids (New York: International Publishers, 1948). Also see Stanley Coben's "A Study in Nativism: The American Red Scare of 1919-1920," Political Science Quarterly, LXXIX (March, 1964), 52-75.

<sup>16</sup> Wilson Record, The Negro and the Communist Party, p. 13.



to the racial status quo. It was split into two factions and many members were being subjected to federal prosecution. Moreover, communist organizing activity did not fully materialize in the South until the late 1920's.<sup>17</sup> Prior to that time rhetorical appeals largely substituted for agitation and organization. Nonetheless, some whites, particularly business and political leaders, used the twin issues of internal subversion and black insurrection to ensure the continued division of working class whites and blacks.

Realizing the vulnerability of racial segregation as a social system, southerners most intent on preserving white supremacy consistently promoted the notion that only alien forces bent on social upheaval would challenge the racial status quo. Large segments of the population in the Deep South, including educated whites, accepted this explanation as the primary force behind resistance to white supremacy. As a popular ideology it had its origins in the red scare of 1919. Although the red scare faded quickly, the ideology took firm roots in the segregationist mind and was employed sporadically between 1920 and 1945 to defend the established social order. Re-emerging as a result of the growing movement for racial justice and as an outgrowth of the onset of

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 37. Record writes, "It is surprising that the Communists with their emphasis on the Negro question, made no great effort to organize Negro tenants and sharecroppers in the South, who even after World War I still represented the bulk of the Negro population and labor force. But until 1928 Communist activity below the Mason-Dixon line was practically nil."



the cold war, the ideology played an increasingly important role in shaping the racial attitudes of whites and determining their responses to the civil rights movement. Following the Brown decision of 1954, it served as the single most powerful argument for impeding or preventing racial change.

Although a distinctly southern social and historical perspective comprised the basis, policies adopted by the federal government provided the immediate catalyst for the widespread acceptance of this particular variant of political fundamentalism. In the mid 1940's, the Truman administration made a modest effort to modify the more egregious abuses resulting from racial subjugation in the South. Those whites most threatened by federal intervention reacted immediately by forming the State's Rights party in 1948. Their primary goals were to unite public opinion and organize resistance through collective political action. Although the Dixiecrats failed in their immediate objective of winning enough votes to deny either of the two major presidential candidates a majority, they succeeded in restoring southern influence in the Democratic party.<sup>18</sup> Perhaps more importantly, the State's Rights party laid the groundwork for the growth of even more reactionary political organizations, particularly the White Citizens' Councils and the John Birch Society.

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<sup>18</sup> Emile B. Ader, The Dixiecrat Movement: Its Role in Third Party Politics (Washington, D.C.: Public Affairs Press, 1955), p. 21.



The state's rights movement of 1948 consistently advanced the notion that the civil rights proposals advocated by the Truman administration grew out of the subversive efforts of the international communist conspiracy. This theme was adopted by the White Citizens Councils, which stressed the importance of resisting racial integration, and the John Birch Society which emphasized the dangers of internal communism. But both groups accepted the basic tenet that the perils they exposed and resisted sprang from the same source--an international communist conspiracy. Because members of these two organizations generally viewed politics in the absolute terms of the fundamentalist, they seldom recognized the distinctions between liberals and communists or between political agitation and subversion. Their ultimate goal was to preserve southern social, economic, and political values from the conspiratorial forces they believed were determined to destroy them. As the Birchers and Council members systematically promoted their fundamentalist persuasion, numerous southerners, including professional and middle class people as well as members of the working class, accepted it as the foundation for their political and racial convictions.

The strong anti-communist policies adopted by the Truman administration and the resulting cold war consensus of the 1950's exerted strong influence on the political thought of white southerners and on their social and racial views as



well. Of singular influence was the proclivity on the part of American officials and policy makers to explain the dynamics of social change and international relations in terms of a monolithic, international communist conspiracy. Yet, paradoxically, whites, who commonly viewed liberalism as the primary ideological justification for communist advancements, questioned the sincerity of anti-communist rhetoric coming from advocates of racial assimilation. Uneasy with and suspicious of the liberalism which served as the ideological basis of the Democratic party, whites in the Deep South generally still were unwilling to give their support to the Republican party. Consequently, their political status vis-à-vis the national parties is best characterized during this period as uncertain and transitional. Moreover, their region remained relatively backward economically and rigidly tied to a caste system increasingly vulnerable to attack. Thus, white supremacists were considerably more susceptible to the domestic implications of the cold war than were most other Americans. On a scale unmatched in any other section of the nation, they turned to locally-based political organizations to publicize and in other ways resist the dangers they believed threatened their society.

Fervent anti-communism, like racial prejudice, was not limited exclusively to the people of the South. Yet, southern anti-communism in its most virulent forms clearly differed from that in other regions of the nation. Among



racial extremists it emerged as an indispensable part of the rhetoric designed to preserve a caste system and promote the cause of white supremacy. Confronted by a growing civil rights movement and by an omnipresent cold war, the arch segregationists and the vehement anti-communists joined forces and, in effect, merged their two ideologies into a single political and social persuasion that won acceptance and support from a large influential number of white southerners.

The purpose of this paper is to assess the most recent manifestation of this popular ideology and attempt to measure the impact it had on race relations in the Deep South. The first three chapters consider the development of this political perspective by the National State's Rights party candidates in 1948, the impact of Senator Joseph McCarthy on southern political thought, and the influence of southern political leaders in the resistance movement. Chapter IV assesses the role of the White Citizens' Council in shaping white attitudes. Chapters V, VI, and VII analyze the segregationists' offensive against religious and educational institutions and against organized labor. Because labor was the object of earlier and more systematic attack by the political elite and its supporters, a considerable portion of Chapter VII focuses on union activities and the reactions they effected prior to 1948. The final chapter emphasizes the ways in which segregationists used their ideology to



discredit and obstruct the goals of organizations working for racial justice.



## CHAPTER I

### DIXIECRATS EMBRACE COLD WAR CONSENSUS

During the cold war years of 1948-1964, the preservation of white supremacy as a way of life constituted a primary domestic political concern of the political elite in the Deep South. Initially, events growing out of World War II set the stage for white resistance to attempts at altering the racial status quo. In an effort to placate the growing dissatisfaction among black Americans, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, in 1941, created by Executive Order 8803 the Fair Employment Practices Committee (FEPC) barring racial discrimination in defense industries.<sup>1</sup> The order had little immediate impact on the racial framework of southern society because most defense industries were located in the Northeast and West. The majority of blacks who remained in the Deep South during the war continued in their traditional roles as farm and domestic workers. Nonetheless, southern political leadership expressed strong opposition to this measure because they realized it had a political and social importance unrelated to its immediate practical applica-

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<sup>1</sup>Louis Ruchames, Race, Jobs, and Politics: The Story of F.E.P.C. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1953), pp. 1-21.



tion.<sup>2</sup> The federal government by taking measures to provide equal job opportunities for blacks had clearly established a precedent that could be used as a partial justification for further advances in the field of civil rights. However, the FEPC did little to alleviate general disaffection among black Americans. In 1942, Earl Brown summed up the feelings of many blacks when he wrote in Harper's Magazine:

In the armed forces, government civil service, and trade unions--no matter where--the story is the same old one: discrimination against the Negro. Because he must fight discrimination to fight for his country and to earn a living, the Negro today is angry, resentful, and utterly apathetic about the war.<sup>3</sup>

Job discrimination was a major complaint, but more outspoken black leaders such as Walter White and Roy Wilkins demanded an immediate end to social and political discrimination as well. To them equal opportunity in employment comprised only one part of the overall effort to improve the status of blacks.<sup>4</sup> However, it was this aspect of the race question that troubled white segregationists most; they

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<sup>2</sup>For example, see the statement by Representative Joseph R. Bryson quoted on page 30 of this work. Bernstein has stated, "(F.E.P.C.) affirmed the rights of Negroes to jobs and focused attention on the power of the federal government to advance the interests of its black citizens." See Barton J. Bernstein, "America in War and Peace: The Test of Liberalism," Towards a New Past, ed. by Barton J. Bernstein (New York: Pantheon Books, 1968), p. 298.

<sup>3</sup>Earl Brown, "American Negroes and the War," Harper's Magazine, April, 1942, p. 546.

<sup>4</sup>The Crisis, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, December, 1940, Vol. 47, p. 375. Also see Rayford W. Logan, ed., What the Negroes Want (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1944).



realized that equal employment opportunities, with or without additional black demands, would ultimately threaten the entire system of racial subordination. Political and social changes were certain to follow in the wake of economic advances. Moreover, it appeared to many whites that the federal government had capitulated to threats of civil disobedience from black leaders. Thus, members of the southern political elite associated reform measures with subversion, militancy, union radicalism, civil disobedience, and even black rebellion. Even those southerners who thought of themselves as liberals on the race issue and "friends of the black man" voiced reservations about the trend they saw emerging. As John Temple Graves stated in 1942:

Liberal Southern leadership, especially the liberal press, has . . . defended against other Southerners the Executive Order and the Fair Employment Practices Committee. . . . But Southern liberals have tended to draw away from the Administration and from the Negro leadership as evidences multiplied of an intent to use the war for breaking down the whole structure of Southern race relations.<sup>5</sup>

Virginus Dabney who in the 1930's had praised the virtues of southern liberalism now voiced alarm about the increasingly militant demands of those seeking reform. In 1943, he wrote:

A small group of Negro agitators and another small group of white rabble-rousers are pushing the country closer and closer to an international explosion which may make the race riots of the First World War and its aftermath seem mild by comparison. . . .

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<sup>5</sup>John Temple Graves, "The Southern Negro and the War Crisis," Virginia Quarterly Review, XVIII (1942), 508.



Extremist Negro leaders and Negro newspapers in this country are demanding an overnight revolution in race relations.<sup>6</sup>

Thus, Dabney and other influential white southerners, whether moderate or liberal, narrowly defined the limits of their participation and support for the struggle for racial justice. Unofficial advisors to President Roosevelt on the race question, they advocated a paternalistic and gradualistic approach to race relations that the more outspoken Negro leaders found totally inadequate and even harmful to their cause.<sup>7</sup> When black expectations and demands exceeded these limits, most white moderates withdrew their support for reform, leaving the South more vulnerable than ever to the influences of the racial extremists.

The role of the federal government in shaping race relations shifted temporarily from the executive to the judicial branch when the Supreme Court ruled in 1944 that white primaries constituted discriminatory state action.<sup>8</sup> Legal maneuvers to circumvent the ruling quickly materialized in the Deep South. However, Judge J. Waties Waring of Charleston followed the 1944 decision by ruling in 1947 that the technically modified white primary in South Carolina

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<sup>6</sup>Virginius Dabney, "Nearer and Nearer the Precipice," Atlantic Monthly, January, 1943, pp. 94-95.

<sup>7</sup>Harvard Sitkoff, "Racial Militancy and Interracial Violence in the Second World War," Journal of American History, LVIII (December, 1971), 677.

<sup>8</sup>Smith vs. Allright, 321 U.S. 649 (1944).



violated the rights of blacks to participate in the political process.<sup>9</sup> Congressman William Jennings Bryan Dorn attacked Waring's decision on the grounds that it meant communists could now vote in the Democratic primary.<sup>10</sup>

Meanwhile, black political participation slowly but steadily increased in the region as a whole. The estimated number and percentage of blacks registered to vote in eleven southern states rose from 250,000 (5 percent) in 1940 to 1,238,000 (25 percent) in 1956.<sup>11</sup> Even such moderate political gains provoked strong and often violent reactions by whites in the Deep South. Repeated lynchings in South Carolina and Alabama, usually followed by arrests, trials, and acquittals, demonstrated the extent to which some whites were committed to white supremacy as a way of life.<sup>12</sup> However, the southern bloc in Congress proved as effective as the practitioners of violence in maintaining the racial status quo. Renewed efforts in the Senate to pass a federal anti-lynching law failed, largely as a result of a united southern political leadership determined to resist further

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<sup>9</sup>Waring's decision was subsequently upheld by the Supreme Court in *Terry v. Adams*, 345 U.S. 461 (1953).

<sup>10</sup>U.S., Congress, House, Statement by Rep. William Jennings Bryan Dorn, 80th Cong., 2nd sess., July 27, 1948 Congressional Record, Appendix, 4654-55.

<sup>11</sup>Donald R. Matthews and James W. Prothro, Negroes and the New Southern Politics (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1966), p. 18.

<sup>12</sup>Atlanta Constitution, June 18, 1947.



inroads by the federal government in the field of race relations. Interestingly enough, this same political bloc strongly supported economic and military programs related to the cold war.

As in the rest of the nation, a strong fear of domestic and international communism emerged in the Deep South in the late 1940's. As black demands for political and social rights increased, more and more of the southern elite linked the drive for civil rights with communist subversion. Progressive regional organizations such as the Southern Conference for Human Welfare (SCHW) proved particularly vulnerable to these charges. Originally, opposition to the SCHW was based primarily on the organization's efforts to improve conditions for blacks by working to abolish politically repressive devices such as white primaries and the poll tax. But in June, 1947, the House Committee on Un-American Activities described the SCHW as "perhaps the most deviously camouflaged Communist front organization."<sup>13</sup> Southern leadership did not seek proof of these charges. The Young Men's Business Club in New Orleans threatened to publish the names of local people backing the SCHW and demanded that the organization "move out of New Orleans."<sup>14</sup> The Memphis Commercial-

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<sup>13</sup>U.S., Congress, House, House Committee on Un-American Activities Report on Southern Conference for Human Welfare, 80th Cong., 1st sess. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1947.

<sup>14</sup>Charlotte Observer, June 15, 1947.



Appeal noted redundantly, "There is no place in the South for the evil things of which the S.C.H.W. is the evil agent-provocateur."<sup>15</sup> Although some Communist party members apparently belonged to the SCHW, the organization remained free from communist control.<sup>16</sup>

The southern ruling elite now possessed an invaluable means of preserving its social and political hegemony. It could, and quite frequently did, point to the activities of civil rights groups and labor unions as glaring examples of communist subversion working to create discontent and rebellion among southern blacks. Moreover, accusations of communist infiltration and subversion appeared even more convincing since Congress now apparently had provided substantiation for these charges. Consequently, the practice of associating communism and the race issue took on an added dimension in the late 1940's. For many whites in the South such associations no longer could be dismissed as the products of ignorant and paranoid minds or as the demagogic rantings of reactionary politicians. Instead, an emerging popular ideology linking civil rights and subversion gained

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<sup>15</sup> Memphis Commercial-Appeal, June 17, 1947.

<sup>16</sup> Thomas A. Krueger writes in his history of SCHW "Most of the attacks on the Conference either missed the mark or exaggerated the influence of the alleged Communists within the organization. . . . The available evidence fails to sustain the charge of Communist domination no matter how it is spelled out: whether the interpretation claims Communist origin and domination or liberal origin and subsequent Communist capture." Thomas A. Krueger, And Promises to Keep (Nashville, Tenn.: Vanderbilt University Press, 1967), p. 176.



wider support in all levels of southern society. Its main promoters were political and business leaders who consciously perpetrated the idea that communism was the guiding force behind the growing determination of blacks to achieve equal rights.

As a pro-segregation consensus re-emerged as the fundamental framework for politics in the Deep South, two events in 1948 gave it additional credibility. First, an intensification in the cold war made more and more Americans susceptible to the notions of conspiracy and subversion.<sup>17</sup> Soviet-American relations had deteriorated quickly after the death of Franklin Roosevelt and the end of World War II. In 1947, President Truman's efforts to gain public support for extensive military and economic aid to Turkey and Greece were based on the fear of Russian expansion which was believed by many to be an integral part of Soviet policy.<sup>18</sup> In 1948, communist elements completed a revolution in China, solidified their control over Czechoslovakia, and appeared to be on the verge of accomplishing a similar feat in Italy. In addition, the Soviet-American clash over access to Berlin

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<sup>17</sup> Robert Divine has pointed out that historians have tended to neglect the relationship between foreign policy and domestic politics during the years of the cold war. See his "The Cold War and the Election of 1948," Journal of American History, VLIX (June, 1972), 90.

<sup>18</sup> Norman A. Graebner, Cold War Diplomacy, 1945-1960 (Princeton, N.J.: D. Van Nostrand Company, 1962), p. 40.



appeared to many as a prelude to open warfare.<sup>19</sup> As relations between the United States and Russia reached a new low, diatribes against international communism became commonplace, particularly from administration spokesmen and journalists. The gist of their message was the same--Western Civilization, commonly referred to as the free world, was threatened by an aggressive totalitarianism bent on world conquest through conspiracy, subversion, and revolution.

On the domestic scene, the issue of internal communist subversion took on added significance in 1947 when President Truman issued an executive order establishing a federal loyalty program.<sup>20</sup> At the same time that internal security was receiving much national attention, the issue of economic assistance to Europe was also being debated. The rationale behind economic assistance to foreign countries was that assistance might inhibit communist expansion. Thus, it appeared to many that the foremost domestic and foreign concern of the Truman administration was the containment of communist influence.<sup>21</sup> A congressional investigation,

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<sup>19</sup>H. Bradford Westerfield, Foreign Policy and Party Politics: Pearl Harbor to Korea (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955), pp. 306-08.

<sup>20</sup>Congressional Record, U.S. President, Executive Order 9835 Establishing Loyalty Program, 80th Cong., 1st sess., 1947-48. Also see Barton J. Bernstein and A. J. Matusow, eds. The Truman Administration (New York: Harper & Row, 1960), pp. 358-63.

<sup>21</sup>For an elaboration of this point see Richard M. Freeland, The Truman Doctrine and the Origins of McCarthyism (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972), pp. 234-45.



ostensibly aimed at uncovering Soviet spy rings and infiltration in the federal government, was described by Truman as a "red herring," but his reprimand failed to curtail increasing political pressures from Republicans and southern Democrats.<sup>22</sup> The House Un-American activities Committee promptly challenged Truman, denouncing him and the Justice Department for not prosecuting alleged spies.

For a long time the Committee on Un-American Activities has been striving diligently to unearth the facts of the Communist conspiracy in the United States and its infiltration into the Government service. It has been necessary to do this because your Administration has failed to keep the people informed about this dangerous situation which now belatedly is being recognized for what it is.<sup>23</sup>

But the administration had been far from negligent in taking precautions against infiltration and prosecuting American communists. The Justice Department brought charges against twelve party members who, under the Smith Act, were indicted by a federal grand jury and subsequently found guilty of conspiring to overthrow the United States government.<sup>24</sup> The hard line taken by the administration in foreign policy, the establishment of a loyalty board, anti-communist

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<sup>22</sup>The New York Times, August 6, 1948.

<sup>23</sup>Letter from Representative J. Parnell Thomas to President Truman. Quoted in The New York Times, September 30, 1948.

<sup>24</sup>The New York Times, July 21, 1948. The Supreme Court upheld the conviction in *Dennis v. U.S.* 341 U.S. 494 (1951).



propaganda, and legal actions against the Communist party served as the basis for a political hysteria affecting many areas of American life, including race relations in the Deep South.

However, the administration's civil rights proposals of 1948 proved to be the single most important factor in strengthening the southern pro-segregation consensus. Truman's committee on civil rights urged nothing less than "The elimination of segregation based on race, color, creed, or national origin, from American life."<sup>25</sup> The President's decision to abolish racial segregation in the armed forces resulted in the most important change growing out of the committee proposals. Significantly, black threats of civil disobedience again proved instrumental in pressuring the executive branch to take concrete action. A. Philip Randolph told the Senate Armed Services Committee that he would urge his fellow black Americans and their white sympathizers to refuse to serve in the armed forces until racial segregation was abolished.<sup>26</sup> Coming as it did during a period of intense international crisis, Randolph's statement aroused considerable concern and attacks questioning his loyalty quickly materialized even among non-southerners. Liberal Senator Wayne Morse, in a senate hearing, suggested that

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<sup>25</sup>The President's Committee on Civil Rights, To Secure These Rights (Washington, D.C., 1947), p. 166.

<sup>26</sup>The New York Times, April 1, 1948.



Randolph's proposals for civil disobedience would be interpreted as treasonous if war broke out.<sup>27</sup> At the same time, however, Morse refuted charges that Randolph was a communist.<sup>28</sup>

While direct and simplistic accusations of communist influence became more and more common, southern politicians developed several variations on the theme--variations designed to appeal to the growing number of Americans in both the North and the South who believed the nation faced imminent danger from subversion and agitation. One of the most effective arguments at the disposal of the southern elite was the idea that Truman's civil rights program encouraged racial agitation and, more importantly, divided Americans at a time when national survival seemingly depended on a united front. Representative William Colmer of Mississippi stated:

First, it (President Truman's civil rights program) has inflicted an apparently fatal blow, not only to the unity of the party, but to the unity of the country, at a time when that unity is so highly desirable in a fight to the death with the enemy of free men--Communism. Secondly, it has encouraged the arrogant demands of these minority groups to whom it was designed to appeal.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> U.S. Congress, Senate, statement by Senator Wayne Morse, 80th Cong., 2nd sess., 1948, Congressional Record, Part IV, 4312. Also see Gilbert Osofsky, The Burden of Race (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), pp. 465-69.

<sup>28</sup> U.S., Congress, Senate, statement by Senator Wayne Morse, 80th Cong., 2nd sess., 1948 Congressional Record, Part IV, 4318.

<sup>29</sup> U.S., Congress, House, statement by Representative William Colmer, 80th Cong., 2nd sess., 1948 Congressional Record, Part IV, 4271.



Representative Joseph R. Bryson of South Carolina, elaborated on this allegation:

The anti-lynching bill, the anti-poll-tax bill, and the anti-segregation bill are bad enough, but the most iniquitous of the President's recommendations is the proposal for a permanent Fair Employment Practices Commission. This piece of legislation is the darling of every radical Negro, Communist and socialist organization in the nation. The startling thing is that the President of the United States should give aid and comfort to those who propose to destroy the American way of life. . . . the people of the United States recognize F.E.P.C. for just what it is, a communist inspired conspiracy to undermine American unity. . . . This is a critical period of national and world history. It is no time to permit Communist agitators to disrupt our national unity by spreading distrust and misunderstanding among racial and minority groups.<sup>30</sup>

However, the main theme under which anti-communism and pro-segregation sentiments merged was that of state's rights. By relating these two emotionally charged concepts the leaders of the Deep South states clearly demonstrated that they considered the preservation of the racial status quo more important than the national unity they advocated. At a meeting of southern governors in March, 1948, seven governors pledged to oppose President Truman in the November election and urged the people of the South to support their efforts. Specifically, the governors requested voters to reject all democratic nominees who favored the proposed federal laws against lynchings, the poll tax, racial discrimination in employment, and racial segregation.<sup>31</sup> An independent

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., statement by Representative Joseph R. Bryson, p. 4361.

<sup>31</sup> The New York Times, March 14, 1948.



political movement grew out of the March meeting, and the State's Rights party convention opened in Birmingham in July. The party chose Governor J. Strom Thurmond of South Carolina for its presidential candidate and Governor Fielding L. Wright of Mississippi for its vice-presidential candidate. References to Truman's civil rights proposals as "threats to make Southerners into a mongrel, inferior race by forced intermingling with Negroes" revealed the semi-hysterical atmosphere of the convention.<sup>32</sup> Thurmond found it necessary to reject the more blatant proposals of the advocates of white supremacy.<sup>33</sup> Still, the platform could hardly be considered a moderate political statement. It described the program of the Democratic party as "infamous and iniquitous," and said it would result in a "police state in a totalitarian, centralized, bureaucratic government."<sup>34</sup> By directly associating civil rights reforms with authoritarian communism, these politicians encouraged the belief among their fellow white southerners that such reforms threatened their freedom and could only result in a soviet type government. Ironically, the advocates of state's rights who denounced civil rights proposals in the strongest terms sounded strikingly similar to administration officials describing the evils of what they commonly referred to as an international communist conspiracy.

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<sup>32</sup>Ibid., July 18, 1948.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid.



Although much of the state's rights rhetoric centered around the race issue, vested economic interests lost no opportunity to denounce government fiscal policies as reckless and even subversive.<sup>35</sup> In some ways the economic issue proved as easy to exploit as the race issue because many Americans wholeheartedly accepted the idea that the basic commitment of the communist bloc countries was to destroy capitalism. Like the intensifying race issue, certain economic debates, such as the question of the ownership of tideland oil, resulted primarily from policies pursued by the federal government. And even though politicians exploited southern fears of financial and racial persecution, ambivalence towards the federal government precluded widespread acceptance of the idea that the administration alone bore responsibility for the South's difficulties.<sup>36</sup>

The theme of conspiracy and subversion assumed a dual nature. The first and more realistic notion was that the

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<sup>35</sup>An editorial in the Arkansas Gazette stated: "It should be recognized that the race issue is by no means the sole cause of the great division in democratic ranks. It is no accident that those who are loudest now in denouncing Mr. Truman are the same southern democrats who have also taken issue with him and his predecessor on many other matters--labor legislation, price controls, public power, federal spending, etc.," The Arkansas Gazette, February 21, 1948.

<sup>36</sup>Lewis M. Killian has pointed out that many white southerners have a "minority psychology" that is common among ordinary citizens, shrewd, conservative politicians, and even liberal scholars. It is likely that this regional trait played an important role in the formation and growth of the State's Rights party. See Killian's White Southerners (New York: Random House, 1970), p. 7.



federal government, backed by liberal politicians and other black sympathizers, intended to alter fundamentally the traditional racial practices of the region. Secondly, many held the belief that foreign conspiratorial elements had infiltrated the federal government and had succeeded in promoting equalitarian economic and racial policies--policies which would culminate in a loss of individual freedom and the imposition of some undefined form of authoritarianism. Such fears enabled the Dixiecrats, under the guise of state's rights, to appeal to racial prejudices as a means of sustaining their political power and economic interests.<sup>37</sup> Thus, Thurmond in his campaign speeches prior to the 1948 election stressed the importance of preserving what he commonly referred to as the American way of life and the southern way of life respectively. Unwilling or unable to see any conflict between the two as they existed in 1948, he labeled

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<sup>37</sup> Emile B. Ader, The Dixiecrat Movement (Washington, D.C.: Public Affairs Press, 1955), p. 8. Ader has written: Although the Dixiecrat adherents included many persons more interested in tidelands oil than segregation, this should not obscure the essential fact that the primary motivation for the formation of the party was opposition to President Truman's civil rights program and that the most effective appeal of the Dixiecrats was to race prejudice.

It would probably be more accurate to say the state's righters' most effective appeal was to race prejudice combined with anti-communism. The merger of the two issues most clearly reflected the economic, social and racial biases of the Dixiecrats. Moreover, the fundamental economic issue was not simply a matter of tideland oil. Rather, it comprised the broader question of southern autonomy to control its economic system free from federal interference and, at the same time, retain blacks in their traditional state of economic and political subordination.



any attempt to alter racial segregation as subversive.

Speaking in Fairfield, Alabama in September, 1948, he pictured the nation as besieged by hostile forces. He stated:

The American system of individual initiative is the hope of economic opportunity for the people of the world in which we live today. It is now under assault from forces throughout the world which would collectivize mankind and destroy the American way of life.<sup>38</sup>

Later, in the same speech, Thurmond maintained that communist spies had infiltrated the government and certain industries critical to national defense. Denouncing the FEPC regulations as a means by which communist agents and saboteurs could infiltrate American industries, he said the rules were "made to order for communist use in their designs upon our national security," and called the FEPC "a law to sabotage America."<sup>39</sup>

Thurmond repeated these assertions in virtually every major speech of his campaign. His running mate, Governor Wright, who had urged Negroes wanting social equality and integration to leave Mississippi, echoed Thurmond's charges.<sup>40</sup> In addition, Thurmond strongly denounced proposed economic sanctions against the South and attacked discriminatory freight rates.<sup>41</sup> Thus, economic issues continued to parallel

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<sup>38</sup>Address of J. Strom Thurmond, Governor of South Carolina, Fairfield, Ala., September 6, 1948.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid.

<sup>40</sup>The New York Times, May 19, 1948.

<sup>41</sup>Address of J. Strom Thurmond, Augusta, Ga., September 23, 1948. Also see Address of J. Strom Thurmond, Raleigh, N.C., October 5, 1948.



closely the racial issue and provided a means by which communism emerged as the scapegoat for the region's collective ills. In October, Thurmond stated explicitly, "The Democratic Party, which stood solidly for states' rights for a hundred years, has been taken over by the foreign schemers and the pinks and subversives."<sup>42</sup> Moreover, he claimed the communists supported such measures as the FEPC and anti-segregation laws because they would usurp the powers of the states, leading to the creation of a national police force and a centralized bureaucratic government. He further asserted, "Only the States' Rights Democrats--and we alone--have the moral courage to stand up to the Communists and tell them this foreign doctrine will not work in America."<sup>43</sup> But Thurmond's political rhetoric was not aimed solely at the Democratic party. He sharply delineated his party's policies from those of the republicans and progressives as well, hurling at them the same accusations of complicity and opportunism he aimed at the democrats. In Louisville, he stated:

These three candidates have yielded to the demands of the parlor pinks and the subversives, backed up by the offer of the votes of a racial minority. They have all three endorsed a platform which would open the doors to eventual communistic control of this Republic.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup>Ibid., Raleigh, N.C., October 5, 1948.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., Lexington, Ky., October 12, 1948.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., Louisville, Ky., October 13, 1948.



Hence, Thurmond skillfully combined the issues of state's rights, white supremacy, and anti-communism. In so doing he laid the groundwork for the emergence in the Deep South of a popular ideology which combined these interrelated elements and served as the basis for white resistance to integration.

Basically negative and in some respects even reactionary, this ideology was largely an outgrowth of the views expressed by Charles Wallace Collins, an Alabama lawyer. His Whither Solid South, published in 1947, defended the region from northern attacks on its institutions and laid the theoretical basis for a resurgence of southern political power.<sup>45</sup> In effect, the book became the political manual of the State's Rights party.<sup>46</sup> Collins rejected the religious and moral arguments for racial equality. In addition, he linked various democratic groups that supported the civil rights movement including blacks themselves, white liberals, Gunnar Myrdal and his associates, the CIO, and the communists.<sup>47</sup> However, unlike many of his admirers Collins made no sweeping assertions of conspiracy and subversion, probably because he wrote prior to the onset of the cold war.

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<sup>45</sup>Emile B. Ader has pointed out that the Dixiecrats proved influential in restoring southern influence in the Democratic party. See his The Dixiecrat Movement, p. 21.

<sup>46</sup>Sarah McCullough Lemmon, "The Ideology of the Dixiecrat Movement," Social Forces, 30 (1951-1952), 168-69.

<sup>47</sup>Charles Wallace Collins, Whither Solid South? (New Orleans: Pelican Publishing Co., 1947), p. 283.



still, he perceived a clear relationship between communism and the struggle for racial equality. Commenting on David Lilienthal's testimony before Congress prior to his nomination as chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission, Collins wrote:

While he [Lilienthal] vocally repudiates Communism the inexorable logic of his theory of "democracy" as the implementation of a faith to promote, to protect and to defend the integrity and the dignity of the individual will lead him down the Communistic road. The basic tenet that the powers of the Federal Government must be used as a means to the realization of "democracy" makes his theory one of stateism, no different in principle from any other form of totalitarianism.<sup>48</sup>

Collins thus provided the southern political elite with an anti-democratic political persuasion linking communism to national efforts to expand the opportunities of blacks. Although he gave only marginal attention to this theme, the Dixiecrats, as previously noted, adopted it as a major aspect of their 1948 campaign. Significantly Thurmond described the main reason behind the rise of the state's rights movement as "opposition to President Truman's so-called Civil Rights Program." He described another reason for the support enjoyed by his party as "opposition to the socialistic trend of the administration."<sup>49</sup> The National State's Rights Committee recommended in 1949 an amendment to the Constitution asserting state sovereignty in areas

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., pp. 301-02.

<sup>49</sup> J. Strom Thurmond in letter to the author, July 28, 1972.



such as education, voting, and civil rights. Reflecting fears of collectivist inroads, the second section of the proposed amendment prohibited nationalization of labor, business, industry, or the professions.<sup>50</sup>

Collins' reactionary political views and the exaggerated rhetoric of the state's righters were not the only factors which contributed to the tendency among whites to regard integration and communism not as two separate and distinct issues but rather as component parts of a monolithic evil. Following World War II, the Communist party made a concerted attempt to gain political influence among black Americans. In the South this effort was directed through the Southern Negro Youth Congress.<sup>51</sup> This organization, like the SCHW, had ties with the Progressive party, but neither the communists nor the progressives succeeded in attracting much support among blacks.<sup>52</sup> Nonetheless, the white supremacists exploited the efforts of both organizations for their own purposes. In September, 1948, Progressive party presidential candidate Henry Wallace began a speaking tour of the South, appearing only before non-segregated audiences.<sup>53</sup> Whites reacted strongly to Wallace, and

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<sup>50</sup> National State's Rights Committee, Constitution and Declaration of Principles (Jackson, Miss., 1949), p. 6.

<sup>51</sup> Wilson Record, The Negro and the Communist Party, p. 251.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 285.

<sup>53</sup> The New York Times, August 28, 1948.



he encountered both verbal abuse and physical violence. Several speeches had to be cancelled while others could be completed only under the protection of the National Guard. Not surprisingly, those who denounced Wallace frequently referred to him as a "communist and a nigger-lover."<sup>54</sup> Commenting on the hostile reaction Wallace encountered, an editorial in the Crisis stated: "Fanaticism and hatred were laid bare but often it was difficult to determine whether Negro equality or Communist support of Wallace was responsible."<sup>55</sup> Either issue had traditionally been capable of arousing emotions in the Deep South; as whites increasingly related the two, violence resulted. Significantly, the attacks on Wallace came at a time when the Truman administration was denouncing Wallace and the progressives for tolerating communists in their midst. The republicans, in turn, were red-baiting both parties, particularly the democrats.<sup>56</sup> Thus, while white supremacy was losing its acceptability outside the Deep South, anti-communism was gaining more and more supporters in the nation as a whole. Southern politicians who related the two issues sought not only to gain regional support but to appeal to the prejudices and

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., September 5, 1948.

<sup>55</sup> The Crisis, October, 1948, p. 297.

<sup>56</sup> Cabell Phillips, The Truman Presidency (New York: MacMillan Company, 1966), pp. 240-41. Also see Richard M. Freeland, The Truman Doctrine and the Origins of McCarthyism, pp. 299-300.



fears of all Americans. In this respect their efforts to build a solid base of support for white supremacy differed little from attempts by the Truman administration to build on and exploit anti-communism for its own political purposes.

In the Deep South, fear of the changing status of blacks accounted, in large part, for the reluctance of politically sophisticated whites to admit that communist influence among black Americans was anything less than widespread and powerful. Others, succumbing to combined propaganda onslaughts both at the local and national levels, sincerely believed that only some outside alien force such as communism could cause dissatisfaction and resentment among blacks. Their views were reinforced by the Supreme Court in 1951 when it upheld the convictions of those individuals found guilty under the Smith Act of conspiring against the American government. Regardless of the reasons, the notion of conspiracy became increasingly important in shaping southern politics and attitudes.<sup>57</sup> By the early 1950's a variety of muddled theories related subversion and conspiracy to racial change. The region's vulnerability to these

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<sup>57</sup> Marion D. Irish has written, "In the 'fighting South' where the first political virtue is militant patriotism, the smear of Communism has been tactically used time and again to smother social and economic reforms." See Irish, "Recent Political Thought in the South," American Political Science Review, XLVI, 125 (1952), 125. It should be added that the "smear of Communism" as it was used in the late 1940's and 1950's was unique since it grew out of a situation in which the federal government launched a legal attack against segregation while almost simultaneously contributing to cold war hysteria. This concerted action added an important new dimension to southern political thought.



pronouncements revealed itself in polls showing that southerners perceived a relatively greater communist threat than other Americans. Moreover, fewer people in the South regarded communism as posing a relatively small threat to their way of life.<sup>58</sup>

Besides an intensification of the cold war and the political bombast it engendered, southern attitudes were influenced by other pressures originating from outside the South to modify the caste system. One of the most important of these resulted from a series of Supreme Court decisions in 1950 affecting the pattern of segregation in southern state universities. The Court ruled that where equal educational facilities did not exist, blacks were denied equal protection when state laws barred them from all-white universities.<sup>59</sup> The Court also ruled that a state could not legally admit a black student to a previously white state university and then segregate him within that institution.<sup>60</sup> Thus, segregated educational systems showed the first signs of being the Achilles heel of traditional southern society.

Whites, encouraged and led by their political spokesmen, prepared for resistance and legal evasion. Although

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<sup>58</sup> Samuel A. Stouffer, Communism, Conformity, and Civil Liberties (Garden City: Doubleday and Company, 1955), p. 204. See Table 4.

<sup>59</sup> *Sweatt v. Painter*, 339 U.S. 629 (1950).

<sup>60</sup> *McLaurin v. Oklahoma State Regents*, 339 U.S. 637 (1950).



most chose non-violent means of opposition, others resorted to intimidation and force in their struggle to maintain the racial status quo.<sup>61</sup> Regardless of the form of the action taken, the goals of the self-styled vigilantes were the same as those of the state's righters--both aimed at preserving white supremacy. The National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago conducted one of the most reliable and extensive surveys on racial attitudes of white southerners. It revealed that during the years 1942-1956 a majority of whites in the South consistently opposed integration of public transportation facilities, living near blacks, and school integration.<sup>62</sup> Since the primary domestic political concern of whites was the race issue, once the notion of internal communist subversion emerged out of the cold war, the two issues inevitably became linked.<sup>63</sup> Hence, through a combination of regional political values, international events, and administration policies, a considerable portion

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<sup>61</sup>New South, V (June, 1950), 8.

<sup>62</sup>Herbert H. Hyman and Paul Sheatsley, "Attitudes Towards Desegregation," Scientific American, CXCV (December, 1956), 35-39.

<sup>63</sup>Alfred O. Hero has written: "Increasing insecurity due to pressure for racial change apparently diverted whatever little attention there was among more uncompromising segregationists away from national and international phenomena to the local scene. Adamant segregationists seemed so emotionally involved in and appeared to feel so threatened by the Negro at home that all other ideas had to be amended to preserve segregation; issues which might upset the racial status quo were ignored or distorted." See Hero, The Southerner and World Affairs (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1965), pp. 422-23.



of white southerners identified domestic communism as the inspirational force behind virtually all efforts to improve the position of southern blacks.



## CHAPTER II

### MCCARTHYISM INFLUENCES SOUTHERN POLITICS

By the early 1950's, anti-communism had become firmly established as one of the primary elements in American political thought.<sup>1</sup> The Truman administration had succeeded in mobilizing public opinion behind its economic and political offensive in Europe. Events at the beginning of the decade aided that effort as did the subsequent overall intensification of the cold war. The Russian acquisition of the atomic bomb, a series of spy trials, the clash between the United States and the Soviet Union over Korea and the outbreak of war there reinforced the already aroused suspicions and mistrust Americans held for communist countries and their sympathizers. The notion of an international communist conspiracy determined to destroy the most cherished aspects of American life gained widespread acceptance among individuals who could not be dismissed as either jingoists or racists. It was, to some degree, a rational response to events as they were portrayed by the American

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<sup>1</sup> Many Americans believed that domestic communism constituted a real danger to national security. A Roper survey revealed in 1952 that nearly half of those interviewed believed that one of the most important things the new administration would have to do would be to keep communists out of the government. See Elmo Roper, You and Your Leaders (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1957), pp. 250, 267.



government and press. Yet, evidence increasingly indicates that the communist bloc countries, the Soviet Union in particular, were not solely responsible for the tensions that existed between East and West.<sup>2</sup> Whether the United States government clearly understood the aims and capabilities of the communist countries is uncertain. What is more obvious is the role of the Truman administration in creating a political atmosphere in which hysteria and irrationality could flourish.<sup>3</sup> Although promoting an anti-communist consensus

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<sup>2</sup>Revisionist works on the cold war are numerous. Among the most authoritative are: D. F. Fleming, The Cold War and Its Origins (Garden City: Doubleday and Company, 1961); Norman A. Graebner, Cold War Diplomacy (Princeton: D. Van Nostrand Company, 1962); Walter LaFeber, America, Russia, and the Cold War (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1968); Gabriel Kolko, The Politics of War: The World and U.S. Foreign Policy, 1943-1945 (New York: Random House, 1968).

<sup>3</sup>See Richard Freeland, The Truman Doctrine and the Origins of McCarthyism (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972), pp. 359-60. Freeland writes:

Nor was the debt of McCarthyism to the politics of the Truman administration limited to the promotion of a political atmosphere congenial to the Senator and his adherents. In fact, in 1947-48 Truman and his advisors employed all the political and programmatic techniques that in later years were to become associated with the broad phenomenon of McCarthyism. It was the Truman administration that developed the association of dissent and disloyalty and communism, which became the central element of McCarthyism. It was the Truman administration that adopted the peacetime loyalty program, which provided a model for state and local governments and a wide variety of private institutions. It was the Truman administration, in the criteria for loyalty used in its loyalty program, that legitimized the concept of guilt by association, a favorite tactic of McCarthy. . . . President Truman believed himself to be a defender of civil liberties and wanted to be remembered as such. His resistance to many of the blatant assaults on traditional American freedoms during the early



enabled the administration to gain support for programs such as the Truman and Marshall plans, it also contributed to certain domestic problems. The rise of McCarthyism and its extension into the campaign of organized resistance to racial progress in the Deep South were among the most significant of these problems.

By 1950, southerners had endorsed the cold war at least as enthusiastically as other Americans.<sup>4</sup> Yet, another consensus had first priority in the politics of the Deep South--the consensus to defend racial segregation and preserve

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1950's entitle him to respect in this connection. But in 1947-48, in order to mobilize the country behind his foreign policies, Truman himself employed and permitted his subordinates to employ many of the same means of restricting democratic freedoms that he would later condemn. He legitimized or tried to legitimize for use in peacetime restrictions on traditional freedoms that had previously been limited in application to wartime emergencies. The practices of McCarthyism were Truman's practices in cruder hands, just as the language of McCarthyism was Truman's language, in less well meaning voices.

Also see Athan Theoharis, Seeds of Repression: Harry S. Truman and the Origins of McCarthyism (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1971).

<sup>4</sup>Freeland, The Truman Doctrine, p. 5. Freeland argues that the cold war consensus had developed by 1948 before the Berlin blockade, the Korean War, etc. Referring to the emergence of strong anti-communist sentiment among Americans, he writes:

These emotions were aroused and these patterns of belief developed as a result of a deliberate and highly organized effort by the Truman administration in 1947-48 to mobilize support for the program of economic assistance to Europe called the European Recovery Program or Marshall Plan. In the absence of this Cold War consensus, it seems likely that the events that triggered McCarthyism would have been accepted with relative calm.



white supremacy. Truman's decision to integrate the armed forces and the federal court rulings outlawing white primaries had awakened many whites to the challenges confronting their caste system. Southern political leaders attempted to delay the inevitable by devising various legal maneuvers aimed at minimizing the impact of federal policies on established racial patterns.<sup>5</sup> Hence, white politicians understood the severity and magnitude of the challenge they faced before the Supreme Court ruled against racial segregation in the public schools in 1954. However, only after the Brown decision and the demise of Senator Joseph McCarthy did influential southerners fully merge the cold war

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<sup>5</sup>Numan V. Bartley, The Rise of Massive Resistance (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1969), pp. 53-57. Bartley's work is the most detailed analysis of southern resistance to racial change in the 1950's. Although he gives only marginal attention to the relationship between anti-communism and segregationist thought, he concludes:

Southern publicists blatantly asserted that the quest for social justice and human dignity was nothing more than a foreign plot, a conspiracy dominated and directed by 'Communist' subversives. To be sure, the assumption that unwelcome ideologies were by nature alien and immoral represented a traditional southern reaction, and the 'Communist-dominated' labor unions of the 1930's were forerunners of 'Communist-controlled' civil rights activists of the 1950's. Nevertheless, the attempt to associate social change with foreign subversion and conspiracy represented the greatest deviation from past justifications of white supremacy [emphasis added] . . . the propaganda barrage undermined the validity of the right of dissent and became a part of a general effort to stamp out the expression of unorthodox thought in the South. And most of all perhaps, it undermined Negro confidence in the basic commitment to justice by white men.

See Bartley, The Rise of Massive Resistance, pp. 185-89.



consensus with the segregation consensus into an ideology that pervaded the region. To understand how that merger occurred, it is necessary to gauge the influence of McCarthy on the attitudes and politics of the region.

Joseph McCarthy, perhaps more than any other individual, exploited and sustained the fears of the American people during the early stages of the cold war.<sup>6</sup> He promoted the belief that extensive communist subversion had occurred in the United States, particularly within certain branches of the federal government. Moreover, he emphasized alleged Soviet aims of unlimited expansion and world conquest while constantly questioning the effectiveness of the American government to deal with internal and foreign problems relating to national security. He effectively capitalized on a political atmosphere which was created in large part by the Truman administration. By exploiting their suspicions and fears, he attracted enthusiastic supporters who believed that McCarthy alone recognized and was willing to confront the dangers they faced. This support was reflected in opinion polls indicating that McCarthy had the endorsement of roughly 50 percent of Americans at the height of his

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<sup>6</sup>See Richard H. Rovere, Senator Joe McCarthy (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1959); Robert Griffith, Politics of Fear: Joseph McCarthy and the Senate (Lexington: University of Kentucky, 1970); and Michael Paul Rogin, The Intellectuals and McCarthy: The Radical Specter (Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1967).



influence in early 1954.<sup>7</sup>

McCarthy enjoyed considerably less support in the South than in other sections of the nation, however. In the spring of 1954, when he was viewed favorably by half of those people interviewed in a Gallup poll, the South was the only region in which more people opposed McCarthy than were favorably disposed towards him.<sup>8</sup> His relative lack of appeal in the region cannot be adequately explained as a democratic-Protestant response to a republican Catholic. Much of the traditional southern hostility towards the Republican party had given way to a new political animosity aimed at President Truman and the Democratic party.

At the 1948 convention the Deep South states opposed Truman's nomination and the platform endorsing his civil

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<sup>7</sup>Gallup Poll Survey, U.S. News and World Report, March 19, 1954, p. 20.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid. Using Samuel A. Stouffer's Communism, Conformity, and Civil Liberties (Garden City: Doubleday and Company, 1955) as a partial basis of their conclusions, Nathan Glazer and Seymour Martin Lipset wrote:

On the question of civil liberties, the South is the least tolerant section of the country. However, the South was the most anti-McCarthy section of the country. There are many reasons: The traditional attachment to the Democratic Party and the fact that McCarthy is a republican; McCarthy is a Catholic and the South is the most anti-Catholic section in this country; McCarthy attacked the Army, and the South has traditionally been the most pro-military section of the country; the South is politically the least informed and people follow local leaders and local opinion which may be more unrelated to national issues at large.

See The New American Right, Daniel Bell, ed. (New York: Criterion Books, 1955), p. 160.



rights proposals.<sup>9</sup> Louisiana, Alabama, Mississippi, and South Carolina subsequently voted for the State's Rights ticket in the fall election. By 1952, several influential southern democrats, including Senators Strom Thurmond and Harry Byrd, and Governor James F. Byrnes openly supported the republican nominee for president. Moreover, four states from the heretofore solid south backed Dwight Eisenhower in that year's presidential election.<sup>10</sup> Collectively, these trends indicate that a growing number of whites in the South used criteria other than party and religious affiliations in determining the merits of a particular politician.

Certain aspects of southern religious thought were in a state similar to the transition in southern political thought. The region remained overwhelmingly Protestant with three denominations--Methodists, Baptists, and Presbyterians--comprising more than 75 percent of the total church affiliation.<sup>11</sup> Although the South had experienced periodic outbreaks of anti-Catholicism, such prejudices were considerably less intense in the 1950's than in the 1920's when nativism reached its zenith. The Ku Klux Klan, which promoted anti-Catholic sentiment more than any other organiza-

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<sup>9</sup> Alexander Heard, A Two Party South? (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1952), p. 151.

<sup>10</sup> The states voting Republican in the 1952 Presidential race included Virginia, Tennessee, Florida, and Texas.

<sup>11</sup> Rupert B. Vance and Nicholas J. Demerath, eds., The Urban South (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1954), pp. 246-47.



tion, suffered leadership and organizational problems and had lost widespread support among southerners. It experienced a temporary revival after the Brown decision of 1954 but enlisted the active support of only a few whites. V. O. Key's description of the Klan in 1949 as "a dying movement in which Southerners take no pride," has proved valid.<sup>12</sup> Secondly, fundamental Protestantism played a significantly weaker role in shaping attitudes in the 1950's than it had previously. As the overall economic situation improved, so did the amount and quality of education. Finally, studies of religious affiliation and political attitudes of this period reveal surprising similarities of opinions between Protestants and Catholics. The findings indicate that income levels for Christian denominations were significantly more important in determining politico-economic opinions than differences among denominations.<sup>13</sup> Hence, while some southerners may have rejected McCarthy primarily because he was a Catholic, his religion does not adequately explain his relative lack of support in the South.

McCarthy's religious and party affiliation notwithstanding, he did have certain political traits in common with white supremacists. His basically authoritarian

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<sup>12</sup>V. O. Key, Southern Politics in State and Nation (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1949), p. 420.

<sup>13</sup>Wesley and Beverly Allinsmith, "Religious Affiliation and Politico-Economic Attitude," Public Opinion Quarterly, XII (Fall, 1948), p. 389.



approach to politics was not entirely alien to an elite whose caste system had survived through the use of coercion, manipulation, and intimidation. Southerners were, as Samuel Stouffer has shown, less tolerant of political nonconformity than people from any other section of the nation.<sup>14</sup> Southern governments, state and local, were simply unwilling to guarantee the civil liberties of individuals who were radicals, communists, or socialists because their views were considered dangerous to the existing social order. Even though the region was unsurpassed in its demand for political conformity, this fact alone proved insufficient to insure McCarthy a wide following in the South. Southern racial intolerance and McCarthy's authoritarian methods shared a common framework, but were manifested by individuals with basically different goals. McCarthy was concerned primarily with establishing a political power base; while the priorities of southern leaders were to preserve the political and racial status quo. His relative lack of support in the region resulted from the fact that McCarthy's intolerance of political nonconformity centered on issues related primarily to foreign affairs and subversion in government. Southern leaders focused on issues more directly associated with race relations.

In a sense, preserving segregation took precedence over all other political questions in the Deep South, including

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<sup>14</sup>Stouffer, Communism, Conformity, and Civil Liberties, p. 111.



the issue of domestic communism. Even after the elite undertook a concerted effort to merge the two issues, integration continued to elicit a stronger emotional response from whites than did charges of conspiracy and subversion. This appears to have been true at least until the mid 1960's when attitudes towards both issues began to show signs of changing. Under such political conditions, McCarthy experienced difficulty competing with racial questions for the attention and support of whites. Although he seldom hesitated to exploit national issues for his own purposes, he never overtly employed the race issue in his efforts to gain political power. Largely for this reason he lacked political appeal to most white segregationists.

Although McCarthy generally avoided personal involvement in politics of the Deep South, he exerted considerable influence in such border states as Maryland and Texas. The relative lack of interest in the race issue in these states explains, in part, why he was influential there. In Maryland, he directed his efforts at defeating Senator Millard E. Tydings in his bid for re-election in 1950.<sup>15</sup> Tydings, one of three democratic members of a special senate investigating subcommittee, had denounced McCarthy's assertions of communists in the State Department as "false and

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<sup>15</sup> Congress, Senate, Committee on Rules and Administration, "Maryland Senatorial Election of 1950," Senate Report 647, 82nd Cong., 1st sess., 1951.



contemptible."<sup>16</sup> The charge probably cost Tydings his senate seat since McCarthy furnished Tydings' opponent with considerable financial and material assistance.<sup>17</sup> Following Tydings' defeat, McCarthy defended his role in the election before the Senate Rules Committee. Maintaining that the real issue in the Maryland election was "Communists in government," he asserted that "no loyal American is an 'outsider' when it comes to getting rid of those who shield Communists in government."<sup>18</sup>

McCarthy's other major foray into southern politics occurred in Texas where he established himself among, and became the political spokesman of, some of the wealthiest businessmen in the United States. Among them were oilmen Hugh Roy Cullen of Houston, Clint W. Murchinson and H. L. Hunt of Dallas, and Sid Richardson of Fort Worth.<sup>19</sup> In exchange for promoting the reactionary political concepts these men held, McCarthy received indirect financial support for his own activities.<sup>20</sup> Working with H. L. Hunt, McCarthy sent two of his research assistants to Texas to help

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<sup>16</sup>The New York Times, July 18, 1950.

<sup>17</sup>U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Rules and Administration, "Maryland Senatorial Election of 1950," p. 5.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., pp. 41-43.

<sup>19</sup>Charles J. V. Murphey, "Texas Businessmen and McCarthy," Fortune, May, 1954, p. 100.

<sup>20</sup>Theodore H. White, "Texas: Land of Wealth and Fear, Part I," The Reporter, March 25, 1954, p. 15. (Hereafter cited as White, "Texas, Part I.")



organize Facts Forum, a television series sponsored by Hunt and organized to promote his philosophy.<sup>21</sup> One of McCarthy's books, McCarthyism, the Fight for America, was distributed unsolicited to the entire mailing list of Facts Forum while certain others were made available to the public through the program.<sup>22</sup> Hunt denied in a television interview in 1967 that he had ever given direct financial support to any of McCarthy's campaigns. However, he did admit, "I supported George Smathers in his race against [Senator Claude] Pepper, . . . and also Willis Smith who defeated Dr. Frank Graham in North Carolina."<sup>23</sup> According to Theodore H. White, Clint Murchison donated \$10,000 to Butler's 1950 campaign against Tydings in Maryland.<sup>24</sup> Hugh Roy Cullen, White states, played a significant financial role in the defeat of Senators Graham and Pepper. The admiration the Texas oilmen held for McCarthy was revealed by Cullen who once described McCarthy as "the greatest man in America."<sup>25</sup>

A striking similarity existed between the views of McCarthy and the political philosophy promoted by the Texas

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<sup>21</sup>"McCarthy, Hunt and Facts Forum," The Reporter, February 16, 1954, p. 23.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>23</sup>"NET Journal," National Educational Television telecast, August 21, 1967: "H. L. Hunt--the Richest and the Rightest." Narrator, Joseph M. Coffey.

<sup>24</sup>White, "Texas, Part I," p. 15.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid.



oil barons. In a speech in 1951, Hunt predicted a struggle for control of the United States between extreme right-wing elements which he called constructives and extreme left-wing elements which he called liberals.<sup>26</sup> He later elaborated on the political division he saw emerging.

I say the line should be drawn between those who love liberty and are for freedom and those who are in favor of Communism. . . . The electorate elects the president, but they do not elect his presidential advisors and we have the same school of presidential advisors as started by Alger Hiss and Harry Dexter White . . . the same school of presidential advisors since the early days of FDR's administration.<sup>27</sup>

Hunt's views paralleled McCarthy's in two important ways. First, he stressed the influence of allegedly sinister and conspiratorial individuals on American foreign policy. Secondly, he divided Americans into two polarized categories, those who supported freedom and those who supported communism. Neither Hunt nor McCarthy made allowances for political diversity, ambiguity, or complexity. By questioning the aims and loyalty of those with differing opinions they not only fostered an atmosphere of suspicion, but limited the open exchange of ideas and information, subsequently making social and political reforms more difficult to achieve.

In the final analysis, McCarthy's alliance with the Texas millionaires is best described as a case of mutual

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<sup>26</sup> "McCarthy, Hunt, and Facts Forum," p. 23.

<sup>27</sup> NET Journal, "H. L. Hunt--The Richest and the Rightest."



dependence. McCarthy enjoyed considerable political power and growing support among the American people; Hunt, Murchison, et al. possessed the financial means to advance McCarthy's goals through contributions to campaigns such as Butler's in Maryland and by promoting his charges on radio and television. However, the fact that these Texas millionaires, some of whom were democrats, supported McCarthy cannot be attributed solely to similar political philosophies. Unlike the wealthy and relatively liberal republican families of the east coast, these men had acquired their wealth comparatively recently. Their wealth was so immense that neither the agitation of southern blacks, nor organized labor, nor even their business competitors posed much of a threat to their financial status. Whether they really viewed internal communist subversion as a legitimate threat to the security of the United States is not beyond question, but they no doubt possessed their share of the paranoia that often accompanies newly acquired wealth. Like the Dixiecrats, their main political concern was the potential power of the federal government to make important social and economic decisions affecting them. Not only did McCarthy attempt to discredit that government, he did so by claiming it was tolerant of and even sympathetic to communist subversion. By adopting this approach to politics, McCarthy promoted the aims of both the state's righters, such as the Dixiecrats,



and vested economic interests, such as the oilmen.<sup>28</sup> As might be expected, some overlap existed between the oil interests and the Dixiecrats. Stewart Alsop, among others, pointed out the fact that the oil interests aimed at improving their economic position through the State's Rights party.<sup>29</sup> Thus, while McCarthy had little appeal to the majority of Dixiecrats who were concerned primarily with the question of race, he enjoyed considerable support among the financially powerful minority whose first priority was economic, not racial.

However, by the spring of 1954 McCarthy had begun to lose support even among his staunchest supporters.<sup>30</sup> The

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<sup>28</sup>Robert J. Harris has stated how such cooperation works:

Vested interests seeking economic gain, and candidates motivated by desire for public office, have cooperated to impress upon the public mind the picture of the federal government as an aggressive enemy. . . . The solicitude of the oil companies for states' rights is hardly based on convictions derived from political theory but rather on fears that federal ownership may result in the cancellation or modification of state leases favorable to their interests, their knowledge that they can successfully cope with state oil regulatory agencies, and uncertainty concerning their ability to control a federal agency.

See Robert J. Harris, "States' Rights and Vested Interests," Journal of Politics, XV (August, 1953), 457-71. Also see Emile B. Ader, "Why the Dixiecrats Failed," Journal of Politics, XV (August, 1953), 356-69.

<sup>29</sup>Atlanta Constitution, October 21, 1948.

<sup>30</sup>A Gallup poll showed a decline in McCarthy's overall support from a high in January, 1954, of 50 percent to 46 percent in March of that year. Correspondingly, the number unfavorable towards him rose from 29 percent to 36 percent. (U.S. News and World Report, March 19, 1954, p. 20.) Following the Army-McCarthy hearings his support continued to



nationally televised Army-McCarthy hearings contributed much to his decline in popularity. His highly eccentric personal behavior and his caustic attacks on General Zwicker and Secretary of the Army Robert T. Stevens turned many of his former supporters against him.<sup>31</sup> An attack upon the army could hardly help McCarthy win support among Texans who, as many other southerners, had a high regard for the military. In addition, numerous military bases located in Texas contributed substantially to the state's economy. Thus, the hearings, which McCarthy had hoped to use to increase his investigative powers, had the opposite result of weakening his influence and eroding his base of popular support.

Perhaps a more important element in the decline of McCarthy's support among Texas oil interests was the simple fact that by mid-1954 he was losing his ability to intimidate members of Congress and the President. A strong resentment had emerged in Congress over the use of Texas oil money to help defeat selected candidates, as had been the case with Senators Pepper of Florida and Graham of North Carolina. In May, 1954, Elizabeth Carpenter wrote in the Arkansas Gazette:

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decline until December when he was censured by his Senate colleagues. At that time, he had less support than at any time since his Wheeling speech.

<sup>31</sup>The most comprehensive account of these hearings is Michael Strait's Trial by Television (Boston: Beacon Press, 1954). Also see Richard Rovere's Senator Joe McCarthy and Robert Griffith's Politics of Fear.



Texas oil men who back Senator Joseph R. McCarthy are being told quietly but emphatically that their support may cost them the income tax privileges they now enjoy. Members of the Ways and Means Committee, who write the tax bills . . . are telling Texas congressmen that it has got to a point where a vote for the depletion allowance is a vote for McCarthy. This turn of events is a result of resentment against 'Texas oil money.'<sup>32</sup>

Significantly, H. L. Hunt indicated in 1967 that he no longer donated to political campaigns although it was obvious that his views had changed little, if any, since the McCarthy years.<sup>33</sup>

In addition to the oilmen, McCarthy had enjoyed substantial support among small businessmen, patriotic organizations such as the American Legion, and even some journalists.<sup>34</sup> One example of how that support manifested itself was a recommendation by the San Antonio Minute Women that

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<sup>32</sup>Elizabeth Carpenter, Arkansas Gazette, May, 1954. A Fortune survey revealed in 1953 that ". . . McCarthy did and does have more appeal to Texas businessmen than to those of any other region, with the possible exception of the Chicago area." See Charles J. V. Murphy, "Texas Business and McCarthy," Fortune, May, 1954, p. 216, and Martin Trow, "Small Business Political Intolerance, and Support for McCarthy," American Journal of Sociology, LXIV (1958-1959), 274.

<sup>33</sup>NET Journal, "H. L. Hunt--The Richest and the Rightest."

<sup>34</sup>One of McCarthy's most enthusiastic supporters in Texas was Ida Darden, publisher of the Southern Conservative in Houston. She anticipated J. B. Matthews' attack on the Protestant clergy when she wrote in early 1953, "The conquest of thousands of Christian ministers of the Gospel by the forces of International Communism constitutes a body blow to Christian civilization from which there may be no recovery." See Ida M. Darden's The Best of the Southern Conservative (Houston, published by Author, 1963), p. 85.



some 600 library books be stamped to indicate that the authors were communist sympathizers.<sup>35</sup> The San Antonio incident indicates clearly the strong tendency among certain supporters of McCarthy to imitate his methods. Similar incidents, undoubtedly, occurred elsewhere in the South. Still, McCarthyism in Texas differed from McCarthyism in the Deep South in several important respects. First, McCarthy's views and methods were immediately adopted and vigorously promoted by organized and financially powerful elements in Texas; this was not generally true of other areas of the South in the years 1950-1954. Only after the Brown ruling in 1954 did the southern political elite commonly employ McCarthy's methods and techniques in its struggle to preserve white supremacy. Second, nowhere else did McCarthyism receive the extraordinary financial support it had in Texas. Finally, Texans as a rule were less obsessed with the race issue than were many other white southerners during these years. As a result McCarthyism existed in its most powerful form in the lone star state.<sup>36</sup> A similar and equally intense intolerance prevailed in the states of the Deep South, but it was an intolerance divorced from the activities of a

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<sup>35</sup>Theodore H. White, "Texas: Land of Wealth and Fear, Part II," *The Reporter*, June 8, 1954, pp. 33-34. (Hereinafter cited as White, "Texas, Part II.")

<sup>36</sup>Obviously not all Texans supported McCarthy or imitated his methods. The strongest opposition to him came from the students and faculty at the University of Texas. See Theodore H. White, "Texas, Part II," p. 37.



single individual. Moreover, it was strongly rooted in the ethnic and racial values of the old south, not in the politico-economic values of the Texas nouveau-riche.

Southern intolerance resulted from two basic concerns--the fear of internal communist subversion and the destruction of a caste system based on white supremacy.<sup>37</sup> Although a majority of white southerners rejected McCarthy, the man, the region's political leaders used aspects of his anti-communism to insure the stability of the South's socio-economic system. First, they emphasized the threat from conspiratorial forces. Second, they made a sharp distinction between those individuals who supported what was commonly referred to as the southern way of life and those who they believed were dedicated to destroying it. Finally, their political leaders far surpassed those of any other region in enacting laws infringing on the personal liberties of individual citizens. South Carolina, Florida, and Texas required their public school teachers to demonstrate proof of loyalty, usually in the form of oaths. Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, North Carolina, and South Carolina required

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<sup>37</sup> Studies of American opinion reveal the comparatively intense feelings of white southerners about racial matters. A longitudinal study of attitudes towards school integration, integration of transportation, and residential proximity shows the changes over a fourteen year period for white southerners and white northerners. In both cases, the proportion that approved integration increased between 1942 and 1956, but the proportion of white southerners never reached the lower (1942) level of the white northerners. See Herbert H. Hyman and Paul B. Sheatsley, "Attitudes Towards Desegregation," Scientific American, CXCV (December, 1956), 35-39.



organizations such as the Communist party to register with the state. Laws dealing with insurrection and rebellion were strengthened and loyalty procedures were established for state officials and employees.<sup>38</sup> Not surprisingly, the Texas state legislature enacted the most extreme measures by passing new loyalty and subversion legislation outlawing membership in the Communist party.<sup>39</sup> Thus, while McCarthy repeated his same tired platitudes, southern legislatures moved quickly to eliminate any trace of dissent that refused to accept the cold war or segregation consensus. Following the Brown ruling, renewed charges of communist influence surfaced particularly in the Deep South. An atmosphere of fear and mistrust based on racism and bolstered by anti-communism permeated the South at a time when McCarthyism was beginning to decline in the rest of the country.

The McCarthy era spanned those years when the future of white supremacy was becoming increasingly uncertain. The preoccupation of whites with preserving their caste system largely excluded the consideration of other issues. Segregationists generally viewed subversion and communism through their distinctive perceptual frameworks shaped primarily by the race issue. Organizational and propaganda efforts by the political elite to preserve racial segregation closely

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<sup>38</sup>Digest of the Public Record of Communism in the United States (New York: Fund for the Republic, 1955), pp. 253, 434.

<sup>39</sup>White, "Texas, Part II," June 8, 1954, p. 32.



resembled anti-communist efforts elsewhere in the country. The techniques employed by the more extreme segregationists paralleled those of McCarthy. While southerners worked to preserve the racial status quo under the guise of state's rights, McCarthy called his struggle to gain political power a fight against communism. Segregationists and McCarthy claimed that the evils they fought posed a serious threat to their respective ways of life. Both efforts acquired the aura of emotionally charged crusades, fully exploiting American xenophobia and provincialism. The southern elite adopted those tenets of McCarthyism best suited to combatting the threat of integration. Thus, while a majority of white southerners lacked enthusiasm for the Wisconsin senator, the region's elite embraced the politics of McCarthyism for its own purposes.

McCarthyism, as Michael Rogin has shown, symbolized the fears and concerns of non-southern conservative republicans and conservative southern democrats alike. Both groups rejected the New Deal, internal communist subversion, expanding government bureaucracies, liberals and intellectuals, and the dubious influences of an increasing cosmopolitanism. McCarthyism grew out of conservative rural politics which is basically the politics of local elites.<sup>40</sup> Because of these political and social concerns, it proved relatively easy for the southern elite to adopt the methods and techniques of McCarthy in the struggle to maintain white

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<sup>40</sup> Rogin, The Intellectuals and McCarthy, pp. 215 and 228.



supremacy. Political leaders, in effect, fused the two issues of communist subversion and racial integration. After 1954, these issues evolved into the ideology of a cohesive and powerful right-wing political movement. Politicians such as Senators James Eastland, Herman Talmadge, and Strom Thurmond, and organizations such as the Citizens Councils promoted a southern variation of McCarthyism. Designed to fit the specific needs of the region's political elite, McCarthyism southern style played a major role in perpetuating racism in the Deep South.



### CHAPTER III

#### POLITICAL ELITE ADVANCES SEGREGATION RATIONALE

The southern political elite adopted the methods of the national political figures who actively promoted the cold war consensus. By the early 1950's, overt race-baiting no longer had wide appeal even in the Deep South. But segregationists in Congress added respectability to their efforts to maintain existing racial patterns by cloaking them under the guise of resisting communist advances. The precedents set by President Truman's loyalty program and by the investigative procedures of the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) and the Senate Internal Security Sub-Committee (SISS) helped establish a climate of opinion that encouraged similar efforts by those in state government.

In 1946, the Republican party won control of both houses of Congress for the first time since 1928. Party leadership immediately seized on the communist issue in an effort to discredit the democrats. Forming an ideological alliance with southern democrats, republican members of HUAC such as Representative Carl E. Mundt called for executive action against alleged subversion. Finally, on March 2, 1947, Truman succumbed to the pressure and issued Executive Order 9835 establishing the Federal Employee Loyalty



Program.<sup>1</sup> In addition to requiring all federal employees to sign an oath of allegiance to the United States government, the loyalty-security program gave the federal government the authority to investigate the political beliefs and associations of all federal employees.

Civil libertarians raised fundamental questions about the influence of loyalty oaths and guilt by association on national political thought. Because the loyalty-security program sanctioned government investigations and could, therefore, be used as a tool against domestic radicals, it was attacked as a serious encroachment on civil liberties. In an address before the American Bar Association, John Lord O'Brian pointed out that the judicial concept of guilt by association is discredited in other countries. Moreover, not until 1920 was there any formal recognition of the concept in American jurisprudence. In that year Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer authorized the wholesale arrests of individuals on the sole grounds that their associates or organizations to which they belonged were suspect. Congress subsequently amended the Immigration Law of 1920 so that individuals could be deported for membership in or affiliation with any organizations advocating opposition to all organized government or the forceful overthrow of the United

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<sup>1</sup>For the most comprehensive study of Truman's loyalty program see Eleanor Bontecou, The Federal Loyalty-Security Program (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1953). Also see Ralph Brown, Loyalty and Security: Employment Tests in the United States (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1958).



States government. O'Brian further argued that "Congress for the past twenty-five years has been consistently endeavoring to establish in our jurisprudence the doctrine of guilt by imputation of belief or 'guilt by association.'" O'Brian cited the proceedings before certain congressional committees and the President's loyalty program as corroborating his assertion: "Previously Congress had condemned 'membership in' or 'affiliation with' a subversive group. The Executive Order considerably expands this description. In prescribing standards it adds the phrase 'sympathetic association with.'"<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps the most incisive critique of the Federal Employee Loyalty Program came from L. A. Nicoloric in 1950. Writing in The American Scholar, he pointed out the dangers in the program. First, it was designed to reveal "potentially disloyal" persons and thus violated the judicial principle that punishment results only from the commission of a crime. Second, it violated judicial safeguards such as reasonable notice of charges, the right to confront and cross-examine the accusers, judicial review, and impartial trials. Finally, it enforced conformity by denying government employees political and intellectual freedom and thus distorted the concept of equal justice before the law.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>John Lord O'Brian, "Loyalty Tests and Guilt by Association," Harvard Law Review, 61 (April, 1948), 604.

<sup>3</sup>L. A. Nicoloric, "The Government Loyalty Program," The American Scholar, 19 (Summer, 1950), 604.



There are some indications that Truman himself had reservations about the loyalty program and recognized its potential dangers.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, unlike the segregationist fundamentalists, he had an interest in helping improve the conditions of black Americans. But by engaging in red-baiting himself and by giving in to the demands of the visceral anti-communists, he indirectly aided those segregationists who exploited anti-communism as a means of preventing racial change. One of the fundamental contradictions of his administration was that Truman limited the civil liberties of some Americans, particularly government employees, while initiating steps to broaden those of black Americans.<sup>5</sup>

Thus, by yielding to pressure from conservative republicans and southern democrats in Congress, Truman not only provided them with a major political victory but also encouraged them to extend their attacks to the state level. Republicans such as Joseph McCarthy and southern democrats such as James Eastland could cite actions of the federal government as proof that communism was a real and present danger. Paradoxically, they charged that same government with not being sufficiently vigilant in screening out and prosecuting alleged subversives. The single most important

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<sup>4</sup>Cabell Phillips, The Truman Presidency (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1966), p. 361.

<sup>5</sup>President Eisenhower's loyalty program of 1953 varied little from that of Truman in its practical effects on individuals employed by the federal government.



effect of this anti-communist campaign was that it threatened the civil liberties of all Americans by creating an atmosphere that bred fear and self-censorship. It created intense pressure for legislation curtailing the rights of free association. Finally, this campaign adversely affected the strategies and goals of those working to promote racial change.

The political coalition of anti-communist republicans and segregationist southern democrats gained strength in both the House and the Senate in the early 1950's. Their combined political clout was most evident in the House, where southern democrats and conservative republicans chaired HUAC from 1945 to 1954. In 1950, it manifested itself in the Senate with the creation of the Internal Security Subcommittee chaired by the Senate's most influential segregationist, James O. Eastland of Mississippi. The two committees worked closely together and provided information to similar state committees. Walter Goodman has described the process as follows:

The House Committee's files . . . were put to use during the eighty-fourth Congress. They were employed by Southerners against the civil rights movement, which had gained great momentum with the Supreme Court school integration decision of 1954. In February 1956, States' Rights activists in Louisiana publicized the alleged Communist front associations of Hulan Jack, Manhattan borough president and a Negro, when he visited New Orleans to participate in a Catholic interracial program. The information has been released by the Committee's staff director (Richard Arens) to Senator James O.



Eastland of Mississippi, who courteously passed it on to his neighbors in Louisiana.<sup>6</sup>

Southerners in Congress had considerable experience using their positions to gain a national audience and promoting their views equating racial change with subversion and conspiracy. Their influence had been strong in HUAC since its inception. Under the chairmanship of Martin Dies of Texas between 1938 and 1944, the committee demonstrated a disposition and ability to stave off racial change by questioning the loyalty of individuals working to abolish segregation. Representative Edward J. Hart, a democrat from New Jersey, succeeded Dies in 1945, but resigned after only a few months because of his reservations about the committee's plans to broaden the scope of its investigations.<sup>7</sup> Hart was followed by Representative John S. Wood, a Georgia democrat, who chaired HUAC from 1945 to 1946 and again from 1949 to 1953. Representative J. Parnell Thomas, a conservative republican from New Jersey, chaired the committee from 1947 to 1948.

Wood, a fervent believer in white supremacy, was also extremely hostile to organized labor.<sup>8</sup> Under his leadership two significant changes occurred in the operation of HUAC. First, the committee built up an extensive file on individ-

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<sup>6</sup>Walter Goodman, The Committee, p. 374.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., pp. 172-73.

<sup>8</sup>Frank J. Donner, The Un-Americans (New York: Ballantine Books, 1961), p. 34.



uals and organizations it considered suspect. Wood's successor, Republican Harold Velde from Illinois, who chaired HUAC from 1953 to 1954, continued this practice. A former FBI agent, Velde led investigations of educational institutions as well as the clergy.<sup>9</sup> Second, the committee fully established itself as a powerful propaganda instrument. It published and released a large number of pamphlets warning the American people of the dangers of communist subversion. According to Charlotte Pomerantz, two million copies of committee publications were distributed in 1950--the bulk of which consisted of the pamphlet "100 Things You Should Know About Communism."<sup>10</sup> In style, content, and tone the HUAC publications resemble those later published by the White Citizens' Council.

As early as 1947, HUAC had compiled and published a series of pamphlets on communism. Four of the pamphlets specifically emphasized the vulnerability of labor, education, religion, and government to communist subversion. By publishing such materials, members of HUAC demonstrated that they had assumed the major responsibility for informing the American public of the dangers of communist inroads in American institutions. The committee went to considerable lengths to explain that it was not launching an attack on

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<sup>9</sup>For a more detailed assessment of these investigations, see Donner, op. cit., pp. 35-36.

<sup>10</sup>Charlotte Pomerantz, The Quarter Century of Un-American (New York: Marzani and Munsell, 1963), p. 48.



labor, education, or religion per se.<sup>11</sup> However, it stressed two points that became basic tenets of anti-communist thought. First, HUAC claimed that communists planned to gain control of the United States by infiltrating its governmental, educational, religious, and labor institutions. Second, it stressed the vulnerability of these institutions to subversive influence, claiming that communists had already succeeded in infiltrating some schools, churches, and union locals.<sup>12</sup> The committee periodically reinforced its security assessments by initiating investigations of individuals working in these fields. It probed the activities of organized labor, civil rights groups, and social welfare organizations, further promoting the belief that efforts to achieve racial and economic justice were communist inspired.

Thus, HUAC helped lay the ideological groundwork for the growth of a segregationist fundamentalism incorporating anti-communism before either the civil rights movement or the cold war consensus fully emerged. The period of its most effective propaganda efforts coincided with the efforts of the Dixiecrats to promote a unified political movement in the South. Although the state's righters failed to have a decisive effect on the 1948 presidential election, they did succeed in two important ways. First, as Emile Ader has

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<sup>11</sup>For example, see U.S. Congress, House, Committee on Un-American Activities, "100 Things You Should Know About Communism and Labor," 1947, pp. 1-2.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.



shown, they strengthened considerably the position of southerners within the Democratic party. The southern bloc in Congress, the majority of whom remained loyal to the party or at least neutral in 1948, emerged with greater ability to determine the ultimate outcome of legislation. Moreover, Truman requested no punitive measures against those Dixiecrats who had deserted the Democratic party in 1948. Second, the embryonic ideology relating white supremacy, anti-communism and state's rights not only survived the defeat of the Dixiecrats but like other expressions of racial and social paranoia, actually prospered from it.

While HUAC appealed to the fears and exaggerated patriotism of Americans on a national level, the Dixiecrats undertook a similar campaign on a regional bases. Both groups repeatedly warned of the impending dangers of communist influence in government agencies and civil rights organizations. The Dixiecrats, under the guise of state's rights, exploited the race issue and intensified racial differences. HUAC, ostensibly working to protect national security, promoted an anti-communist sentiment that demanded social and political conformity. The two efforts frequently overlapped, resulting in a blurring of regional and ideological distinctions. In the minds of a large number of southern whites the race issue became even more closely associated with patriotism--a patriotism that incorporated an intense feeling of loyalty to southern and American



values. Consequently, sectionalism and racism merged with nationalism to form a political and social overview that equated agitation for racial change with treason. A fundamental failure of national leadership provided the white supremacists with this unique opportunity to arouse the passions and fears of southern whites.

Nowhere was this failure of leadership more evident than in the work of those representatives and senators who served on HUAC and the SISS. Committee members promoted the cold war consensus and supported legislation providing harsh penalties for dissident groups and individuals. The single most repressive legislation to emerge from these committees was the Internal Security Act, which required dissident political groups to register with the U.S. attorney general.<sup>13</sup> Originally proposed in 1948 as the Mundt-Nixon Bill, the Internal Security Act was passed over Truman's veto in 1950.<sup>14</sup> A coalition of southern democrats and conservative republicans originated, sponsored, and guided it through Congress. Its strongest supporters included Senators McCarran, Mundt, Eastland, and McCarthy and Representatives Nixon, Velde, and Walter. The law was a direct outgrowth of hearings held by HUAC and SISS. In addition to providing ten concentration camps to be used in case of

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<sup>13</sup>U.S. Congress, Internal Security Act: Public Law 31, 81st Cong., U.S. Code Title 50; Sections 781 and 811.

<sup>14</sup>See Cabell Phillips, The Truman Presidency, pp. 347-77.



national emergency, the act required organizations such as the Communist party to register with the attorney general and supply the Justice Department with names of officers and members.

The Internal Security Act, which followed Truman's loyalty program, also served as a model for state governments in the Deep South where similar legal measures were enacted. These laws required that civil rights organizations furnish membership lists to various state governments and that local and state employees take loyalty oaths.<sup>15</sup> The primary purpose of these restrictions was to destroy organizational efforts of groups such as the NAACP. In 1950, the Louisiana legislature passed a law requiring a number of organizations to submit annual membership lists to the state attorney general. Under this statute the state brought suit against the NAACP in 1956.<sup>16</sup> The same year Alabama filed a similar suit against the NAACP for failure to comply with a state registration law.<sup>17</sup> The South Carolina legislature established an investigative committee to inquire into the influence of the NAACP in state-supported black colleges. It also enacted legislation prohibiting the state or any school district from employing members of

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<sup>15</sup>For a summary of these laws see Walter F. Murphy, "The South Counterattacks: The Anti-NAACP Laws," Western Political Quarterly, XII (June, 1959), 371-90.

<sup>16</sup>Race Relations Law Reporter, Vol. 1, 1956, p. 576.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 107.



the NAACP.<sup>18</sup> These laws constituted a systematic attack on organizations resisting segregation. The political elite had seen the loyalty programs, congressional hearings, and purges of government employees effectively eliminate political dissent among a large proportion of the American public. State legislatures used similar laws to stifle objections to segregation and preserve the racial status quo.

A few white southerners viewed the effort with suspicion and feared further encroachments on civil liberties. However, for most whites, the exigencies of the cold war combined with those stemming from racial conflict justified the repressive laws enacted by their state legislatures. The merger of the anti-communist consensus and the segregationist consensus undoubtedly facilitated the passage of these laws. Without this combination of social and political ideologies, enactment would have been considerably more difficult, and in some cases unlikely. Thus, southern elites, many of whom held local and state political offices depended on legal restrictions as part of the strategy to resist changes in the overall status of blacks.

In addition to the restrictive legal measures, the governing elite attempted to discredit individuals and institutions working to advance the cause of civil rights. Local political figures such as Georgia Attorney General Eugene Cook successfully discredited the NAACP by constantly

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid., pp. 600-01, 751.



attacking its motives and methods.<sup>19</sup> These tactics proved equally effective in discrediting the basically white institutions working for racial reform at the state and local levels. There the elite conducted ideological offensives against labor, education, and religion in an attempt to prevent these institutions from altering, even in relatively minor ways, traditional racial practices. Local resistance groups depended on and got the support of political leaders some of whom, as members of Congress, enjoyed national reputations. Although most of them generally avoided direct involvement in local organizations, the prestige and respectability they enjoyed among whites contributed much to the resistance movement. Moreover, they participated in formidable attacks on various national institutions, particularly the Supreme Court. Among those politicians who assumed leadership roles and proved most outspoken in their criticism were Senators James O. Eastland of Mississippi, Herman E. Tamm of Georgia, and Strom Thurmond of South Carolina.

Following the Brown ruling in 1954, Eastland quickly acquired a reputation as the Senate's most vigorous defender of segregation and the southern way of life. In 1955, he stated: "To abolish segregation would destroy the South . . . the position the courts are taking would destroy our form of government. It is a fight that's got to be made."<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> See Chapter VIII of this paper for a more detailed account of attacks on the NAACP.

<sup>20</sup> Quoted in the Jackson Clarion-Ledger, June 12, 1955.



As an influential member of the Senate, he enjoyed a unique opportunity to promote segregationist and anti-communist fundamentalism. A wealthy plantation owner who had supported the Dixiecrats in 1948, Eastland charged only a few days after the Brown decision that the justices had been "indoctrinated and brainwashed by Left-wing pressure groups."<sup>21</sup> Specifically, he linked the decision to the combined influence of civil rights groups, organized labor, and international communism. Pointing out that Justice Hugo L. Black had accepted an award from the Southern Conference for Human Welfare, Eastland, echoing HUAC described the organization as "a notorious Communist front." He characterized Justice William O. Douglas as "virtually the protégé of the C.I.O." and claimed the labor organization "helped finance the fight against segregation." He accused Douglas of favoring recognition of communist China, stating that it was "a mockery of law for a man who sits on the highest tribunal of our country openly to espouse the cause of our greatest enemy."<sup>22</sup> Throughout his campaign for re-election in 1954, Eastland repeatedly attacked the Court's ruling and openly urged whites to defy the law; he emulated many of the red-baiting techniques of his colleague, Senator Joseph McCarthy. Shortly after his re-election, he resumed his ideological offensive against the Court. In a speech

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<sup>21</sup>Quoted in The New York Times, January 30, 1956.

<sup>22</sup>Above quotes can be found in the Nashville Tennessean, May 28, 1954.



before the Senate, the Mississippi senator said:

The question is asked, will the South obey this decision of the Supreme Court? Who is obligated legally or morally to obey a decision whose authorities rest not upon the law but upon the writings and teachings of pro-communist agitators and people who have a long record of affiliations with anti-American causes and with agitators who are part and parcel of the communist conspiracy to destroy our country?<sup>23</sup>

Eastland's importance in promoting segregationist fundamentalism stemmed from his dual role as a spokesman of white supremacy and as a powerful anti-communist legislator. He carried out a two-front assault against racial integration on the one hand and against alleged communist subversion on the other. As a member of the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee, he worked closely with Senator Joseph McCarthy from whom he apparently learned a great deal about professional anti-communism. During a 1956 session of the SISS, Eastland asked McCarthy if the Supreme Court were not handing down one pro-communist decision after another. When McCarthy expressed agreement, Eastland, elaborating on his original question, asserted: "What other explanation could there be except that a majority of that court is being influenced by some secret, but very powerful communist or pro-communist influence."<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>U.S., Congress, Senate, Sen. James Eastland's declarations on school desegregation cases and pro-Communist agitators, 84th Cong., 1st sess., Vol. 101, May 26, 1955, Congressional Record, pp. 7119-7124.

<sup>24</sup>U.S., Congress, Senate, Hearings Before the Subcommittee to Investigate the Administration of the Internal Security Act and Other Internal Security Laws of the



By 1958, Eastland claimed he had proof that communism was a significant influence on the Court's decisions. In an analysis of recent Court rulings, he classified the opinion of each justice as "pro-communist" or "anti-communist," concluding that the overwhelming majority of opinions submitted since Earl Warren became chief justice were "pro-communist."<sup>25</sup>

Eastland's charges against the Court received widespread publicity and attracted considerable attention in the Deep South. To many whites his leadership position in the Senate gave his accusations more credibility than similar statements by local politicians. Because he had access to restricted information, much of which originated from HUAC investigations, his role as chairman of SISS furnished a facade of legitimacy to his allegations of subversion.

Eastland's anti-communist views closely resembled those of McCarthy and Senator William Jenner, an Indiana republican and a strong McCarthy supporter. Many white southerners, and not a few other Americans as well, whose racial prejudices and strong anti-communist sentiments thwarted more rational judgment, regarded Eastland as a leading authority on matters of domestic security. He and his committee were cited widely as sources for the charges made by segregationist and anti-communist fundamentalists.

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Committee on the Judiciary. 84th Cong., 2nd sess. June 26, 1956.

<sup>25</sup>U.S. News & World Report, July 18, 1958, pp. 81-82.



Moreover, unlike most of his colleagues, he directly influenced the tactics used by the resistance organizations. Eastland, as did McCarthy, claimed to have substantial evidence revealing the extent to which communist inroads had been made in American institutions. In 1955, shortly after assuming the chairmanship of SISS from Nevada democratic Senator Pat McCarran, he called for a Senate investigation of the Supreme Court. By taking this step, Eastland indirectly served as the originator of the movement to impeach Chief Justice Earl Warren. In his resolution asking for investigation of the Court, Eastland linked several of the authorities cited in the Brown decision to the communist conspiracy. He stated:

A provisional investigation of the authorities upon which the Supreme Court relied reveal to a shocking degree their connections with and participation in the world-wide communist conspiracy.<sup>26</sup>

Eastland charged that Theodore Brameld, author of Educational Cost in Discrimination and National Welfare, and E. Franklin Frazier, author of The Negro in the United States, had twenty-eight citations in the files of HUAC connecting them with subversive organizations and activities.<sup>27</sup> And he described Gunnar Myrdal as "a socialist who served the Communist cause."<sup>28</sup> Other southern senators such as South Carolina democrat Olin D. Johnston endorsed Eastland's

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<sup>26</sup> Washington Post, May 26, 1955.

<sup>27</sup> Charleston News & Courier, May 26, 1955.

<sup>28</sup> Memphis Commercial-Appeal, May 27, 1955.



charges against the Court and joined him in sponsoring the resolution calling for a Senate investigation of the Court's decision.<sup>29</sup>

Of all the influential members of the political elite in the South, Eastland was the most active and effective promoter of grass-roots resistance to racial integration. He stated as his objective the preservation of the "culture and the institutions of the Anglo-Saxon race."<sup>30</sup> He called for the creation of "an organization which, using lawful means, will meet the organizing ability of the NAACP."<sup>31</sup> He supported the Federation for Constitutional Government, a largely ineffective organization whose aim was to coordinate resistance efforts. More importantly, he endorsed the White Citizens' Councils and spoke at Council rallies across the region. As one of the most outspoken and politically influential representatives of the Councils, Eastland, more than any other political leader, advanced the concept linking racial change to subversion and treason. Under his influence, the Mississippi Citizens' Council assumed a leadership role, and its speakers and organizers traveled throughout the South to promote massive resistance.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>Charlotte News, June 2, 1955.

<sup>30</sup>The Memphis Commercial Appeal, December 29, 1955.

<sup>31</sup>Quoted in the Jackson Clarion-Ledger, June 12, 1955.

<sup>32</sup>Dan Wakefield, "Respectable Racism: Dixie's Citizens' Councils," The Nation, October 22, 1955, p. 340.



Senator Eastland's colleague, Democratic Senator Herman E. Talmadge of Georgia, also acted as a political spokesman for the advocates of massive resistance and white supremacy. Talmadge made an important contribution to the propaganda campaign of the fundamentalists in 1955, when he published You and Segregation, a segregationist polemic that equated racial integration with national impotence and vulnerability to communist subjugation.<sup>33</sup> Talmadge attacked the NAACP, the CIO, and the Southern Regional Council. He cited HUAC and SISS as the sources for charges of communist inroads into American society and politics.<sup>34</sup> Echoing Eastland, Talmadge asserted that those individuals advocating racial equality had been "brainwashed" by the communists:

It is a national tragedy that so many well-meaning people have fallen into the trap of the Communist party . . . . They have followed the Communist party line in the matter of segregation and have been so completely brainwashed that segregation in any form means a violation of the highest democratic principles, without realizing the sinister purpose of the Communists.<sup>35</sup>

Secondly, he challenged one of the most common assertions of the cold war integrationists--that racial segregation provided propaganda for the communist world in its battle with the West. Because southerners wholeheartedly accepted the cold war consensus, they were particularly sensitive to the

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<sup>33</sup>Herman Talmadge, You and Segregation (Birmingham: Vulcan Press, 1955), pp. 44-45.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., pp. 34-36.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 16.



frequent suggestions that they were aiding the enemy. Talmadge attempted to alleviate this concern by urging his fellow southerners not to give in to integrationists because to do so would amount to capitulating to those who wanted to destroy the nation.<sup>36</sup>

Strom Thurmond repeated Talmadge's assertions and proved equally influential in furthering segregationist fundamentalism. Many of the whites who supported him in 1948 now joined resistance organizations such as the Citizens' Council. Perhaps more than any other spokesman for segregation, he believed and accepted his own propaganda. At the heart of his argument was the assertion that an international communist conspiracy had succeeded in infiltrating the American government, particularly the Supreme Court. As a result of this infiltration, the Court was now responding favorably to the demands of various left-wing civil rights organizations which were, he claimed, also infiltrated by subversives. In The Faith We Have Not Kept, Thurmond wrote:

Our official anti-communism has been mere rhetoric; our policies, rarely successful, have been directed at the alleged nationalist expansionism of the Soviet Union itself, not at the international conspiracy controlled from Moscow.<sup>37</sup>

As a trustee of Bob Jones University, a supporter of the John Birch Society, and a general in the Army Reserve,

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Strom Thurmond, The Faith We Have Not Kept (San Diego: Viewpoint Books, 1968), p. 91.



Thurmond maintained close contacts with religious and political fundamentalists and with the military establishment. He was highly suspicious of liberals and considered them communist dupes in foreign as well as domestic politics. Moreover, he continued to expound on the red menace long after most of his southern colleagues had begun to exhibit some reservations about indiscriminately associating civil rights with subversion. In fact, Thurmond's racial and political outlook in the early 1960's was essentially the same as it had been in 1954.

Southern democrats capitalized on a number of national developments to solidify their positions of power and influence. In 1954 the Senate censured McCarthy and the republicans lost their majority in both houses of Congress. Thus, the ideological offensive, altered because of the importance white southern politicians placed on the race issue, shifted from the republicans to the southern democrats. In addition, the Brown ruling resulted in the surfacing not only of white racial fears but also of vaguely defined fears of communist subversion which southern politicians exploited. Some did so because they felt as threatened as everyone else; but others clearly used the combined issues primarily to ensure their political positions. The result was a close relationship between these individuals and the grass-roots resistance movement that emerged shortly after the Brown decision.



The most important of the resistance organizations was the White Citizens' Council. The Ku Klux Klan, which periodically resorted to physical violence against those working to promote racial change, had comparatively few followers, even in the Deep South. However, most southern whites shared the Klan's position that equated integration with communism and with the destruction of a cherished way of life. Whites in the Deep South gave strong support to the Citizens' Council and its policies of economic coercion and social pressure. Although the Council did not achieve its highest membership level until 1960, the popular ideology it promoted enjoyed widespread acceptance in the region from the start. Political leaders such as Eastland played an important role in fueling the resistance movement and in promoting the popular ideology which accompanied it. Even whites who rejected both the Klan and the White Citizens' Council often accepted without question the charges made by Eastland, Thurmond, Talmadge and others. Consequently, race relations in the 1950's and early 1960's were shaped to a great extent by the pronouncements of those individual members of the political elite who assumed responsibility not only for preserving white supremacy but also for awakening the nation to what they considered the inherent dangers of international communism.



## CHAPTER IV

### RESISTANCE GROUPS DEMAND CONFORMITY ON RACE ISSUE

As a strong southern congressional bloc demonstrated time after time its ability to prevent the passage of civil rights legislation, black leadership, particularly the NAACP, increasingly depended on court suits to achieve reform. Largely through successful legal challenges, black students, by 1951, had entered formerly all-white state universities in a number of border states.<sup>1</sup> An NAACP suit, initiated in Clarendon County, South Carolina, challenged the legality of racially segregated public schools. In 1951, the case of Briggs v. Elliot began to move through the federal courts. In June, a three-judge federal court in a two-to-one decision upheld the constitutionality of segregated schools but ordered the equalization of school facilities.<sup>2</sup> Judge J. Waties Waring, a native South Carolinian, issued a vigorous and prophetic dissent describing segregated facilities as "inequality in itself."<sup>3</sup> The NAACP appealed to the

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<sup>1</sup>New South, July, 1951, vol. 6, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup>The New York Times, June 24, 1951.

<sup>3</sup>The reaction in Waring's home town proved extremely hostile. His fellow Charlestonians burned a cross in his yard and threw bricks through the windows of his house. He and his wife, ostracized from Charleston society, soon moved to New York City. See Raleigh News and Observer, January 29, 1952, and The New York Times, February 24, 1952.



Supreme Court to review the ruling just as similar cases came to the Court from other states. In a unanimous decision, the Court declared in May, 1954, that racial segregation deprived blacks of equal protection of the laws guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment. Closely following the dissenting view of Judge Waring, the Court stated, "We conclude that in the field of public education the doctrine of 'separate but equal' has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal."<sup>4</sup>

Only a few months after the Brown ruling, Joseph McCarthy was censured by his Senate colleagues. As McCarthy's influence among the American people declined, an atmosphere of fear and mistrust pervaded the states of the Deep South, largely as a result of the segregationists' angry response to the Court's decision. The political elite assumed its traditional role of narrowly defining the racial and political behavioral patterns of whites and blacks. The old arguments of black inferiority and state's rights continued to play a significant part in the rationale of resistance, but fundamentalist spokesmen increasingly relied on the twin bugaboos of black rebellion linked to communist subversion. The ideology of the white supremacists, like McCarthyism, depended on the cold war as a means of establishing and maintaining its legitimacy. Combined with the increasing

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<sup>4</sup>Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, 347 U.S. 483 (1954).



momentum behind the civil rights movement, the tensions growing out of the cold war enabled the elite to manipulate effectively public opinion, and foster a consensus based on resisting change.

The outbreak of open warfare in Korea had verified many Americans' worst fears about international communism and strengthened the anti-communist consensus promoted by the Truman administration. Although the Eisenhower administration negotiated a peace settlement in Asia, international tensions remained high and continued to influence domestic politics. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles considered shifting from a primarily defensive foreign policy based on containment to an offensive one aimed at eliminating Soviet hegemony in Eastern Europe.<sup>5</sup> On the domestic front, Attorney General Herbert Brownell, Jr. and Vice President Richard M. Nixon frequently spoke of the internal communist dangers facing the American people. The Supreme Court, by upholding the constitutionality of the Smith Act, endorsed the efforts of the Justice Department to destroy the American Communist party by jailing its leaders. The party was formally outlawed in 1954 yet the Senate and the House continued hearings and investigations of subversion and other "un-American" activities. Thus, policies and activities of all three branches of the federal government

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<sup>5</sup>Emmet John Hughes, The Ordeal of Power (New York: Atheneum, 1963), p. 70.



contributed to a strong anti-communist sentiment among the American people.

The fact that the Brown ruling came in the midst of a concerted governmental campaign against international and domestic communism is one of the most overlooked aspects of the decision. At least since 1948, the people of the Deep South had been told repeatedly by their leaders that the civil rights movement was communist inspired and directed. Many had come to believe that communist influence was widespread in the executive and judicial branches of the federal government. As a result, the Brown decision not only verified fears of direct federal intervention in matters of race and reinforced the prevailing segregationist consensus, it also appeared to give credence to the charges of the most influential and outspoken white supremacists. From the international and domestic events of 1948 through the Korean War and the Brown ruling, the elite of the Deep South accumulated persuasive evidence to exploit in playing upon the fears and prejudices of their fellow white southerners. The result was the growth of a strong organized resistance to racial change and the development of what Wilma Dykeman and James Stokely have called "McCarthyism Under the Magnolias."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Wilma Dykeman and James Stokely, "McCarthyism Under the Magnolias," The Progressive, Vol. 23, August, 1959, pp. 6-10.



Just as Truman's civil rights program served as a catalyst for a cohesive political movement in the Deep South, the 1954 Supreme Court decision inspired the growth of Citizens Councils. Combining local efforts with those of state and national politicians to promote interposition, massive resistance, social and political conformity, and a rigid anti-communism, the organization emerged first in Mississippi but spread rapidly to the other southern states.<sup>7</sup> The prosegregation argument, as developed by the Council, assumed a number of social, political, economic, and even religious facets. However, Council members, as spokesmen of white supremacy, invariably linked the drive for racial change to communist subversion. This supposition is fundamental in Tom P. Brady's Black Monday, one of the most widely publicized segregationist tracts.<sup>8</sup> Brady, a Mississippi judge who had attended Yale and had taught sociology at the University of Mississippi, headed the speakers' bureau for the State's Rights party presidential campaign in 1948.<sup>9</sup> In Black Monday, he defended white supremacy as the best way of life for both races, and, significantly, dedicated his book to "those Americans who firmly believe

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<sup>7</sup> The most detailed account of the origins and growth of the Citizens Council is Neil R. McMillen's The Citizens Council (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1971), pp. 15-40. Also see Bartley, The Rise of Massive Resistance, Chapter 6.

<sup>8</sup> McMillen, The Citizens Council, p. 162.

<sup>9</sup> James Graham Cook, The Segregationists (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1962), p. 27.



socialism and communism are lethal 'messes of porridge' for which our sacred birthright shall not be sold."<sup>10</sup>

Brady devoted a considerable portion of his work to attempting to demonstrate the racial inferiority of blacks and castigating the federal government. Nonetheless, he specifically emphasized neither the evil effects of racial integration per se nor the dangers of surrendering state's rights to the federal government. Rather, he stressed the perils of what he called a "Red Conspiracy" whose ultimate goal was to take control of the United States. According to Brady, by creating racial turmoil and promoting racial amalgamation, communism would inevitably weaken the nation's ability to defend itself. He argued that "The great threat to this Nation is that of creeping Socialism and Communism. The inter-racial angle is but a tool, a means to an end, in the overall effort to socialize and communize our Government."<sup>11</sup>

Published by the Mississippi Citizens Council in 1955, Black Monday was highly influential throughout the Deep South. It, in effect, replaced Charles Wallace Collins' Whither Solid South, published in 1947, as the foremost political statement of the region. Like Collins, Brady was a proponent of a deeply rooted southern conservatism, and the ideological framework of the two men was strikingly

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<sup>10</sup>Tom P. Brady, Black Monday (Winona: Association of Citizens Councils, 1955), see the author's foreword.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid, pp. 67-68.



similar. Yet, the sharp contrast between the tones of the two works is significant. Whereas Collins' writing was, on the whole, logical and relatively temperate, Brady's was in-temperate and paranoiac. These two books, in a real sense, reflect the changes that had occurred in the attitudes of influential segregationists between 1947 and 1955. No doubt, much of their concern grew out of the failure of the state's rights movement in 1948 and the growing momentum behind the civil rights struggle. However, the duration and intensity of the cold war proved equally important in shaping southern political thought throughout the 1950's.

Whites in the Deep South enthusiastically endorsed the anti-communist efforts of the federal government at the same time they resisted that government's limited attempts to improve the lot of black Americans. Throughout the 1950's the federal government spent considerably more time and effort maintaining an anti-communist consensus than it did working for racial change. Consequently, the elite encountered virtually no opposition as it adopted anti-communism, modified it to appeal to the psychology of racism, and promoted it with determination and vigor. The assertion that the very survival of the nation, as well as the survival of the South's way of life, depended on understanding the communist menace became a common supposition. Brady expressed this view as follows:

"Never before in the history of this nation has there been such infiltration of Communists and



Socialists into the various branches of our Government. The divulging of information regarding the atomic and hydrogen bomb, the betrayal of the high secrets of our Government in its operations with other nations is appalling. . . . The Attorney General's office should primarily concern itself with these major crimes, which are threatening the very foundations of our Government and national security. Instead of doing these things, the responsibility falls upon the shoulders of such men as McCarthy, who, though his methods are unorthodox or deplorable, at least exposed these Communists who had infiltrated into our Armed Services and into the most important departments of our Government."<sup>12</sup>

Brady's statement reflects a fear on the part of segregationists over the role of the Justice Department in providing some protection for the civil rights of blacks. Obviously, if the attorney general followed Brady's suggestion and concentrated legal efforts on subversion, less would be done in the field of civil rights. His qualified endorsement of McCarthy indicates a tendency among the southern leaders to portray McCarthy, after 1954, as a heroic fighter against the communist menace. In addition, Brady advocated abolishing public schools, using economic boycotts to intimidate blacks, and establishing a special court to try and punish "all undesirables, perjurers, subversives, saboteurs, and traitors."<sup>13</sup>

Such extreme proposals emanating from a respected and educated spokesman for southern conservatism can be explained only as the result of acute social tensions in the Deep South--tensions directly related to developments in race relations and international politics. Blacks, with

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 80.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., pp. 83-86.



limited and unenthusiastic support from the federal government, stressed the need for immediate change. Fearful of change himself and sensing the mood of his fellow whites, Brady adopted the common approach of authoritarians everywhere. In effect, he argued that white society faced a danger serious enough to justify adopting extreme measures to insure intellectual and behavioral conformity. His aim, like that of other members of the elite, was preservation of the racial and socioeconomic status quo and of his own privileged position. His willingness to support radical changes in other areas of southern life, closing the public schools, for example, indicates the importance the elite attached to maintaining the basis of their vested political and economic interests. To achieve this goal, Brady called for the formation of an organization of states "interested in stopping and destroying the Communist and Socialist movements in this country."<sup>14</sup>

The formation of a formal organization of states, as Brady envisioned it, failed to materialize. However, in the Deep South, the Citizens Councils served essentially the same purpose. Largely a middle-class movement, the Council included among its organizers and supporters planters, merchants, and professionals. Tom Waring, editor of the Charleston News and Courier and one of the strongest Council

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 72. Interestingly enough, Brady called for a "cold war" against the Negroes as a part of his proposal for the use of economic boycotts. See page 84.



supporters in South Carolina, described the Mississippi Council leadership as follows:

Among the directors are bankers, lawyers, and a surgeon; real estate and insurance men; a cotton broker; and a land broker, an automobile dealer, an advertising man and a wholesale merchant. The chairman is a funeral director and the vice-chairman sells road machinery.<sup>15</sup>

Efforts to recruit new members were usually directed through civic organizations such as the Rotary, Exchange, or Kiwanis clubs.<sup>16</sup> Among the Council's most important goals was "to influence public opinion and public policy . . . [and] engage in a program of public education through publications and speakers."<sup>17</sup> As a means of implementing this goal, the Citizens Council established itself as the main force behind a propaganda campaign unsurpassed in the twentieth century South. On the local level, it assumed responsibility for preserving the social and economic hierarchy--a hierarchy that had remained virtually unchallenged since the populist movement of the 1890's. The organization found substantial support for its work among prominent political figures on the national and local levels. Because Council activities were generally endorsed or controlled by the governing class

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<sup>15</sup>Quoted in The Citizens Council, Vol. 1, November 1955, p. 1. The leadership of the Alabama Council consisted of two state senators, who were also planters, and several attorneys. See The Resistance Groups of the South (Atlanta: Southern Regional Council, 1957), p. 2.

<sup>16</sup>The Resistance Groups of the South, p. 2.

<sup>17</sup>"Citizens' Council--A Brief History," The Citizen, November, 1968, p. 14.



of the region, they enjoyed a respectability and appeal that otherwise would have been unattainable. Some members of the political elite, Mississippi Governor Ross Barnett and Senator James Eastland, for example, openly aligned themselves with the organization. Others, unwilling to identify themselves as Council members, contributed to its strength by endorsing its aims and ideology. As staunch segregationists and anti-communists, these individuals were, in effect, the Councils' most valuable supporters.

Attorney General Eugene Cook of Georgia, a strong backer of the Council, proved initially to be one of the most effective of those political spokesmen who claimed a direct link existed between racial change and communism. Cook, a southern Baptist and member of the Exchange Club, had served as the state's attorney general since 1945. Addressing the Peace Officers Association of Georgia in 1955, he attacked the NAACP for trying "to force upon the South the Communist-inspired doctrine of racial integration and amalgamation."<sup>18</sup> As supporting evidence, he cited the work of his own staff as well as that of the staffs of Congressman James C. Davis of Georgia and Senator James O. Eastland of Mississippi. Specifically referring to the files of the House Un-American Activities Committee and the Senate

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<sup>18</sup> Georgia Attorney General Eugene Cook, "The Ugly Truth About the NAACP: An Address Before the 55th Annual Convention of the Peace Officers Association of Georgia," Atlanta, Ga., 1955, p. 1. Southern Regional Council files.



Internal Security Subcommittee, Cook repeated his speech throughout the South charging that NAACP leaders Roy Wilkins, Clarence Mitchell, and Thurgood Marshall had direct communist ties. He concluded that:

. . . the NAACP is being used as a front and tool by subversive elements in this country. Either knowingly or unwittingly, it has allowed itself to become part and parcel of the Communist conspiracy to overthrow the democratic governments of this nation and its sovereign states.<sup>19</sup>

Cook's use of congressional committees as the basis of his allegations reflected a common practice among the political elite of repeating the charges and duplicating the investigatory efforts of Congress. As an influential member of the Georgia political structure, he effectively increased the credibility of his assertions by showing that they were substantiated by Congress, an ostensibly credible institution. However, Eastland and other southern members of HUAC and SISS benefited politically and economically from promoting the idea that civil rights for blacks was first and foremost a manifestation of communist subversion. Intent on preserving white supremacy, they used their political positions to maintain the social and racial structure of their society.

By 1955, White Citizens Councils had established organizations in each of the five states of the Deep South plus

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 10.



several other southern states.<sup>20</sup> Determined to shape political thought and influence race relations throughout the region, the Mississippi Council, headquartered in Jackson, assumed primary responsibility for disseminating information and promoting the organization's image. In addition to publishing its official periodical The Citizens' Council, initiated in October, 1955, the Mississippi Council published and sold for minimal prices related articles, speeches, and books. Council official Robert Patterson estimated that by 1958 the organization had mailed some five million pieces of literature into every state.<sup>21</sup> Many Council publications, such as Cook's address on the NAACP, made a direct link between racial change and communist subversion. Some other publications linked the two issues indirectly, giving supporting "evidence" that the South was threatened with incipient revolution.<sup>22</sup> Significantly, most Council publications either lacked official substantiation altogether or

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<sup>20</sup>Paul Anthony, Pro-Segregation Groups in the South (Atlanta: Southern Regional Council, 1957), p. 13.

<sup>21</sup>Robert Patterson, 4th Annual Report (Greenwood: Association of Citizens' Councils, July, 1958), p. 3. Also see McMillen, The Citizens Council, pp. 35-36.

<sup>22</sup>Bartley, The Rise of Massive Resistance, pp. 83-84. Bartley and McMillen concede that the propaganda efforts of the Councils proved highly effective. Bartley maintains that the Citizens Councils peaked in 1956 and by 1957 had begun to decline as an organization. This was not true of the ideology. While setting a precise date is difficult, the early 1960's appear to have been the zenith for the particular brand of political fundamentalism promoted by the Citizens Councils and other white supremacists.



relied on HUAC, SISS, or the state investigating committees as sources of information. However, few individuals within the region questioned either the Council's sources or conclusions, further demonstrating that whites in the Deep South states constituted the large majority of the Councils' audience and were most susceptible to its propaganda.<sup>23</sup>

The ideological offensive launched by the Citizens Councils borrowed from traditional racist assertions of black inferiority, from the state's rights and anti-communist doctrines of the Dixiecrats, as well as from the methods and techniques of McCarthyism. At the heart of Council ideology lay the concept that communism was the origin of and force behind the civil rights movement.<sup>24</sup> Used to promote

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<sup>23</sup>Estimates of membership in the Citizens Councils vary but Bartley and McMillen estimate a maximum of 250,000. See McMillen, The Citizens Council, p. 153, and Bartley, The Rise of Massive Resistance, p. 84. Paul Anthony of the Southern Regional Council suggested in 1957 that a membership of 350,000 was a "conservative estimate." See Anthony, Pro-Segregation Groups in the South (Atlanta: Southern Regional Council, 1957), p. 13. The vast majority of this membership was located in the states of the Deep South.

<sup>24</sup>Regarding this point Bartley states: "Southern publicists blatantly asserted that the quest for social justice and human dignity was nothing more than a foreign plot, a conspiracy dominated and directed by 'Communist' subversives. To be sure, the assumption that unwelcome ideologies were by nature alien and immoral represented a traditional southern reaction, and the 'Communist-dominated' labor unions of the 1930's were forerunners of 'Communist-controlled' civil rights activists of the 1950's. Nevertheless, the attempt to associate social change with foreign subversion and conspiracy represented the greatest deviation from past justifications of white supremacy." See Bartley, p. 185. Bartley inexplicably describes the above supposition as "startling." It was the natural outgrowth of the cold war and of the racial situation in the South, a manifestation of the anti-communist consensus promoted by the federal government, the media, and other American institutions.



these beliefs was the Council's monthly publication, The Citizens' Council (later designated The Citizen).<sup>25</sup> The periodical served two essential purposes: first, it emphasized the virtues of whites who believed in segregation and actively resisted racial change. Council writers consistently portrayed them as hard-working, patriotic, respectable, God-fearing people who were forced to struggle against great odds to repel the forces of evil. Its spokesman attempted to disassociate the Council from what they considered to be less respectable segregationist groups, particularly the Ku Klux Klan. Council members, in turn, generally avoided overt acts of violence, relying on more subtle, and often more effective, forms of intimidation such as economic boycotts.<sup>26</sup> Second, the Council publication attacked individuals and institutions that questioned or worked to change the racial and socioeconomic structure of the region. Writers labeled even those advocating minimal change as "outsiders," "agitators," "race-mixers," "mongrelizers," and "Communists." They stressed the remotest links between individuals supporting racial change and organizations which they considered subversive. In true McCarthy fashion, they skillfully practiced the art of asserting guilt by

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<sup>25</sup> In October, 1961, the Council periodical was published in the form of a journal entitled The Citizen.

<sup>26</sup> For a detailed account of how the Citizens Council used the economic boycott as a means of intimidating those supporting racial change see McMillen's The Citizens Council, pp. 209-215.



association.<sup>27</sup>

The result was the creation of an atmosphere in which political issues other than race and subversion were either relegated to obscurity or shaped to accommodate the prevailing cold war and racial tensions. Of all the political questions facing southern whites, none fulfilled the needs of the professional segregationists as well as anti-communism. Emulating McCarthy's techniques, white supremacists fully exploited the issue as a means of establishing the legitimacy of their organizations, exercising influence and power, and manipulating public opinion. Although the Citizens Council employed many of the same methods used by the McCarthyites, its organizational structure was considerably more developed. Fully organized on the state and local levels, it resembled the grass-roots efforts of the Dixiecrats in 1948. Even though McCarthy's activities affected virtually all levels of American society, they lacked the unified structure necessary to create a mass political movement. This was probably true because McCarthy's major objective remained the enhancement of his own political power.

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<sup>27</sup> One of the best examples of this ploy was the manner in which the Citizens Councils attacked the Supreme Court's Brown decision. The judges, Council spokesmen claimed, were influenced by radicals and the NAACP. Both had connections with the Communist party or "Communist-front" organizations. If the Brown ruling resulted from communist pressure and influence, "loyal" Americans could do their duty only by denouncing those advocating integration and defying the law of the land.



After 1954, the similarities between segregationist fundamentalism and McCarthyism overshadowed their differences, enabling the elite to forge its own unique form of McCarthyism. The key to this merger and the element held in common by practitioners of McCarthyism and the proponents of white supremacy was the importance both placed on broadening support for their respective views and promoting a political conformity pervasive enough to stifle dissent and resist change. Finally, both groups depended on an atmosphere of repression and political intolerance for their existence.

The federal government, by making less than an all-out effort to end either racial segregation or the cold war, contributed to the influence fundamentalist thought enjoyed in the Deep South. Few government officials at the national level attempted to refute the conspiratorial assertions of the white supremacists. As a result, their ideology, which had the support of a sizable number of local political elites, was able to exert a strong and wholly negative influence on race relations. Officials at the state and federal levels of government constantly reminded southerners of the imminent dangers of the cold war. At times, international events seemed to confirm their most extreme assertions. In crisis after crisis the United States and the Soviet Union attacked each other's foreign policy and exchanged threats. The defeat of the French in Indochina in



in 1954 was followed by workers' uprisings in Poland and Hungary and full-scale war in the Middle East.<sup>28</sup> In 1957, the Soviet Union launched the first orbital space satellite, creating serious doubts among many Americans about the status of United States scientific technology and even about the nation's ability to defend itself. Subsequent clashes between the United States and the Soviet Union insured the continuance of a strong anti-communist sentiment in the South and the nation at large. Thus, with consistency and considerable success, segregationist spokesmen were able to link domestic disturbances involving racial agitation to events growing out of the international rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union.

Medford Evans, Council spokesman and former history professor, most fully developed this political perspective. During World War II, Evans had worked as chief of security for the Manhattan Project which had the responsibility for developing the atomic bomb.<sup>29</sup> In 1961, he served as a personal aide to Major General Edwin A. Walker, who had been forced to resign from the army after it was revealed that the soldiers under his command were being subjected to right-wing political indoctrination. In December of 1961, the Council reprinted an article by Evans attacking the "freedom

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<sup>28</sup>See Paul Y. Hammond, The Cold War Years: American Foreign Policy Since 1945 (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1969), pp. 82-94.

<sup>29</sup>For a brief biographic sketch of Evans see The Citizen, December, 1961, p. 8.



rides" into the South. In the article, which first appeared in the John Birch Society publication American Opinion, Evans quoted a statement made by Martin Luther King, Jr. that young blacks struggling to overcome Jim Crowism in the South identified with African blacks and other third world people trying to eliminate colonialism.<sup>30</sup> Evans claimed that King's strategy for eliminating segregation included a combination of the example set by African resistance to colonialism, black nationalism, and civil disobedience. The ultimate aim, Evans charged, was the political dissolution of the white power structure.<sup>31</sup>

Further evidence of the close alliance that had developed between the Citizens Councils and the John Birch Society came in January, 1962. The Citizen contained an editorial featuring Senator Strom Thurmond's ten point plan to win the cold war.<sup>32</sup> The same issue carried two feature articles--one attacking President Kennedy's cabinet appointee Robert C. Weaver for his alleged communist affiliations and another written by General Edwin A. Walker from a speech he had given in Jackson, Mississippi. Walker, a John Birch Society member, called for a crusade against "the enemy" which, he maintained, had made serious inroads into the

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<sup>30</sup>"The 'Freedom Rides'--Why Did They Fail?" The Citizen, December, 1961, p. 1.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid.

<sup>32</sup>Not surprisingly, one of Thurmond's proposals was to guard against internal infiltration and subversion. See The Citizen, January, 1962, Vol. 6, p. 2.



United States government, causing it to adopt foreign and domestic policies beneficial to the communist conspiracy.

Today our country is sending aid, supplies and weapons to our enemy and training his soldiers in the United States. It protects Communist infiltration and sabotage in 50 states of the Union. It supports a War in Katanga against the anti-Communists. It supported Castro's takeover of Cuba-- which is 3,000 miles in the rear of our own front lines. It supported the Red Swede Hammarskjold, taking instructions from Moscow. It collaborated and co-existed on the battlefield in Korea with our enemy.<sup>33</sup>

In September, 1962, an article by Medford Evans entitled "Forced Integration Is Communism in Action" appeared in The Citizen. Published at a time when tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union were extremely high, it represented the clearest and most detailed Council statement linking the issues of communism and race. Evans and other Council publicists realized that by 1960 the fundamentalist ideology had evolved into a virtual consensus among whites. Evans stated explicitly that the race issue could, in no way, be separated from the communist issue. He wrote that "the world Communist Movement" aimed to destroy racial segregation in the South as a first step towards the destruction of basic American institutions.

The Communists' real motive is not integration as such. Their real motive is the destruction of the existing white society in this country. . . . In my judgement the attack on racial segregation is the leading edge of the Communist attack on America. Any right-wingers or conservatives who attempt to

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<sup>33</sup> Edwin A. Walker, "There Is No Substitute For Victory," The Citizen, January, 1962, Vol. 6, p. 10.



oppose Communism without also opposing the NAACP, Martin Luther King and other integrationists are like those who might try to oppose a football team without tackling the ball carriers.<sup>34</sup>

Moreover, he claimed that the South had become the military bastion of the United States. The Soviet Union, he stated, not only viewed the region as a center for racial agitation but also as a prime military target. Maintaining that the South's geographical location as well as its racial problems made it particularly vulnerable to communism, Evans said:

Today, with Russian troops in Cuba, and with a massive Red infiltration of Mexico, we in the South are the part of the nation closest to Communist-held territory in Latin America. That is why I believe that if the Cold War turns really hot it will begin in the South. . . . The struggle for the world will be decided here!<sup>35</sup>

Evans, a contributing editor for American Opinion and for The Citizen, served as the foremost ideological spokesman for the Citizens Council and the John Birch Society.<sup>36</sup> More than any other individual, he shaped the propaganda of the two organizations into a common ideological overview.

From its inception, the John Birch Society had consistently maintained that the civil rights movement was not merely being exploited by communists for their own ends. Rather, Society spokesmen claimed that agitation for racial

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<sup>34</sup>Medford Evans, "Forced Integration Is Communism in Action," The Citizen, September, 1962, Vol. 6, p. 13.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., pp. 13-14.

<sup>36</sup>The John Birch Society publication American Opinion was first published in 1958. Prior to that Welch had promoted his views in One Man's Opinion.



change was the direct result of a communist conspiracy and that many individuals involved in the movement were conscious agents of that conspiracy.<sup>37</sup> In 1956, Robert Welch, founder of the John Birch Society, published his highly publicized "A Letter to the South on Segregation." Until the mid 1960's, it comprised the main element in the Society's ideological offensive against the civil rights movement.<sup>38</sup> Welch named Theodore Brameld, E. Franklin Frazier, and Gunnar Myrdal as being among the foremost authorities relied on by the Supreme Court in the Brown ruling. He charged that Brameld and Frazier had been listed as members of what he called "officially-cited Communist fronts."<sup>39</sup> In addition, he emphasized the role of Myrdal's An American Dilemma in shaping the Court's decision. Describing the author as "a swedish socialist and collaborator with Communists," he named a number of individuals who had assisted Myrdal, including Franz Boas, W. E. B. DuBois, Clark Foreman, and E. Franklin Frazier. Welch stated, "All of these

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<sup>37</sup> See Benjamin R. Epstein and Arnold Forster, Report on the John Birch Society (New York: Vintage Books, 1966), p. 9.

<sup>38</sup> In 1965, the John Birch Society published Welch's pamphlet "Two Revolutions at Once" which, as Benjamin R. Epstein and Arnold Forster have stated, marked the beginning of an even more vigorous effort by the Society to promote its ideology linking civil rights and subversion. As Robert Welch stated, "Fully expose the 'civil rights' fraud and you will break the back of the Communist conspiracy." Quoted in Report on the John Birch Society, p. 7.

<sup>39</sup> Robert Welch, "A Letter to the South," One Man's Opinion, September, 1956, p. 30.



have been active participants in known Communist fronts, most of them in many such fronts."<sup>40</sup> Welch claimed that the Court's ruling, like the civil rights movement in general, was communist inspired. He charged that racial hostilities growing out of the movement would result in a civil war, giving the communists an opportunity to take control of the United States. He urged the white people of the South to resist these dangers by exposing the communists' methods of operation.

Put the blame where it belongs, squarely on the shoulders of the Communists. Even the known and major preparations by the Communists over many years, for bringing about this situation, have been tremendously more extensive than realized, or even suspected by the American public. For you must remember that in any ideological arena one communist can count on the support of ten fellow travelers; each fellow traveler can marshal the help of ten left-wing liberals; each left-wing liberal can lead by the nose ten 'progressives' who look up to him intellectually; and the influence of the Communist at the center spreads through hundreds of agents who do not have any idea that their actions and beliefs and demands are Communist inspired.<sup>41</sup>

Extremist organizations such as the Citizens Councils and the John Birch Society most effectively promoted the popularly accepted belief linking racial change to communist subversion. However, their success, to a substantial degree, depended on the acceptance and promotion of similar views by influential southern elites, some of whom had only remote ties to organized resistance. In South Carolina, as in the Deep South generally, segregationist fundamentalism was

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<sup>40</sup>Ibid., p. 31.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 32.



endorsed and promoted by most of the state's leading journalists. Tom Waring, editor of the Charleston News and Courier, probably did more to advance the Council and its political views than any other individual in South Carolina. In a 1955 attack on the NAACP for its alleged communist affiliation, Waring stated:

One does not need to be a McCarthy to realize that Soviet Russia's interests are served by breaking down American traditions and stirring feuds among the people and the regions of the United States.<sup>42</sup>

Throughout 1956 Waring continued his attacks on the NAACP, although he demonstrated some reluctance to assert that its leadership contained party members.<sup>43</sup> By 1957, he used interchangeably such terms as "Negro race agitators" and "Bolsheviks of race agitation."<sup>44</sup> The following year he endorsed a statement by J. B. Matthews, who, while testifying before a Florida legislative committee modeled on HUAC, claimed that the NAACP had been a prime target of American communism for some thirty years. In addition, he supported Matthews' charge that communists had influenced every major racial incident in the United States since the Brown decision in 1954.<sup>45</sup>

William D. Workman, South Carolina editor and author of The Case for the South, perhaps best articulated the

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<sup>42</sup>Charleston News and Courier, December 5, 1955.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., May 12, 1956.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., February 21, 1957.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., February 12, 1958.



fundamentalist view espoused by the Citizens Council and the John Birch Society. Like Waring, he defended the Council as a respectable organization, ignoring its role in promoting an atmosphere of suppression, mistrust, and violence. Describing the situation that prevailed in the Deep South in 1959, he wrote:

. . . there is a strong bond of common identity and tradition which ties together a considerable portion of the white South into a homogeneous grouping of individuals whose thoughts, attitudes, and actions reflect a similarity which cuts across geographic, economic, educational, and political lines.<sup>46</sup>

Workman's generalization overstates the extent to which homogeneity characterized the region. Nonetheless, partially as a result of the efforts of Waring, Workman, and others, little dissent existed concerning the two most salient political issues of the time--race and communism. And, as Workman pointed out, the prevailing consensus extended beyond the Citizens Council and John Birch Society memberships.

Today, these men (and women) are not in the ranks of the Ku Klux Klan or in the most virulent pro-segregation organizations. But thousands of them are members of the responsible Citizens' Councils which abound in the Deep South, and more thousands think alike on the segregation question even though they belong to no group, make no speeches, and attend few meetings.<sup>47</sup>

"Thinking alike" on the segregation issue did not mean merely opposing racial change. Rather, it encompassed a

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<sup>46</sup>William D. Workman, The Case for the South (New York: The Devin-Adair Company, 1960), p. 1.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., p. 19.



diabolical view of communism linked to a strong determination to preserve white supremacy.

Workman, in reference to the NAACP, admitted that the link made between racial change and communist subversion was based on the strategem of guilt by association. Moreover, he was aware of the fact that many of the charges against the civil rights movement originated in congressional and governmental agencies controlled by segregationists. Nonetheless, he questioned neither the sources nor the means by which their accusations were employed. Describing the prevailing political atmosphere, he stated:

[The NAACP] has come to represent, in the eyes of countless Southerners, a distinct threat to the very fundamentals of American constitutional government and an instrumentality of the Communist conspiracy. The injection of this latter element into the situation . . . reflects both a willingness to ascribe the basest of motives to an agency which is regarded as an implacable foe of the South, and a tendency to cross identify communism and integration, not entirely without reason.<sup>48</sup>

His role as an articulate spokesman of southern elites explains Workman's refusal to reject the use of guilt by association as a means of discrediting the civil rights movement. And, as was the case with most other southerners, the cold war strengthened his anti-communist sentiments and proved instrumental in shaping his subsequent hard-line resistance to racial change. He candidly described how and why a distinct political fundamentalism emerged among whites and the role of elites in promoting it.

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<sup>48</sup>Ibid., p. 191.



Throughout the entire region, governors, attorneys general, and other public and private spokesmen of substance in the pro-segregationist ranks have exploited every discernible connection between the NAACP and Communism. . . .<sup>49</sup> (emphasis added)

As influential editors, Waring and Workman did much to increase the credibility of and gain acceptance for a modified version of white supremacy--a version that appealed more to patriotic sentiment than to race hatred. The pattern they used of endorsing segregationist fundamentalism and attacking those advocating racial changes was repeated in the four other states, where it assumed an added rhetorical intensity and made the criticisms of Workman and Waring appear moderate in comparison. In Georgia, Attorney R. Carter Pittman, in a speech denouncing racial equality, said Americans had to choose between Americanism and Marxism, urging them to "organize to fight fire with brimstone."<sup>50</sup> Attorney General Eugene Cook and Roy Harris, editor of the Augusta Courier, took similar positions. In Alabama, Council spokesmen included State Senators Samuel M. Engelhardt and Walter C. Givhan who enjoyed the support of other state officials such as Governors John Patterson and George Wallace.<sup>51</sup> In Mississippi, state officials and the white

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> R. Carter Pittman, "Which Shall It Be--Liberty or Equality, Americanism or Marxism?" Vital Speeches, XX (1954), p. 760.

<sup>51</sup> For a detailed account of the Alabama Citizens Council, see McMillen, The Citizens Council, Chapter Three.



populace at large gave more support and acceptance to the ideology of the Citizens Council than those of any other state. A State Sovereignty Commission, established in 1956 to preserve segregation, hired secret investigators to inquire into alleged subversive activities and kept special files on individuals known to favor integration.<sup>52</sup> The Jackson Clarion-Ledger and numerous smaller newspapers consistently echoed charges of conspiracy and subversion. Louisiana enjoyed the dubious distinction of having two of the most reactionary political leaders of all those in the region who promoted white supremacy and anti-communism-- State Senator William Rainach and millionaire oil man Leander H. Perez. Rainach headed a state investigative committee modeled on HUAC and was the first president of the Louisiana Citizens Council. He and District Attorney Perez proved highly successful in inflaming public opinion which, in turn, prevented racial change.<sup>53</sup>

Thus, local elites in the Deep South manipulated public opinion to preserve not only their own privileged status but that of their race and class as well. They had learned from the Dixiecrats that the white people of the region no longer responded to the old blatant racism based purely on the concept of black inferiority. Nor was the issue of state's

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<sup>52</sup>James W. Loewen and Charles Sallis, eds., Mississippi: Conflict and Change (New York: Random House, 1974), p. 257.

<sup>53</sup>Anthony Lewis, Portrait of a Decade (New York: Random House, 1964), pp. 157-58.



rights sufficient in itself to rally the mass of whites behind their leaders. However, when the traditional fears of racial change were linked to the relatively new fears growing out of the cold war, the overwhelming majority of whites responded, displaying a strong unity and an intense resistance to change. In effect, they accepted the popular ideology developed by the segregationist fundamentalists and conservative elites at the local level. These local elites received vital support for their efforts from those individuals who represented them in the federal government. Congressmen and senators, acting as individuals and as investigating committee members, played an indispensable role in gaining acceptance for a fundamentalist ideology whose final justification depended on its effectiveness in preserving the status quo.



## CHAPTER V

### CHURCHES ENCOUNTER SEGREGATIONISTS' IDEOLOGY

The racial views of most white ministers in the Deep South did not differ fundamentally from the views of their congregations. However, the small minority of clergymen who expressed reservations about segregation caused consternation among those whites dedicated to its preservation. In an attempt to minimize the effects of clerical dissent, the political elite promoted the idea that ministers who favored integration were either communists or communist sympathizers. Segregationists in all levels of southern society accepted the view that linked subversion with ministers who spoke out for the elimination of segregation. Although they ultimately proved unsuccessful in their attempts to preserve a rigid caste system, segregationist spokesmen wielded sufficient influence to prevent many individual ministers from breaking with the prevailing consensus.

Until the 1960's, no other institution in America enjoyed the respect and legitimacy generally accorded to organized religion. This attitude was particularly common in the Deep South, where the influence of the church has been greater than in the rest of the nation. At mid-century, white Protestantism in the region constituted a distinct



cultural pattern largely shaped by the Baptist and Methodist majorities. As a rule white Protestants had little interest in relating to Protestant groups outside the region. The "social gospel" had scant appeal to a people who regarded individualism as a cherished virtue. Thus, while the race issue surfaced as the single most important moral question before the church and the body politic, white southern Protestantism's primary concerns continued to be "saving souls" and inveighing against the evils of liquor and sex. Even ministers who recognized the moral implications of segregation often demonstrated a reluctance to raise the issue with their congregations.<sup>1</sup> Many individuals who worked for social and racial change, some of whom belonged to the church, viewed organized religion in the South as a culturally homogeneous institution that protected the status quo more than it questioned it. For the most part white ministers either chose to remain silent on the issue or supported the preservation of segregation. Shortly after the Brown ruling in 1954, some 250 Methodist ministers from the South pledged to resist all moves to integrate the Methodist Church. They openly advocated opposition to those Methodist ministers who advocated altering segregation laws and practices. Moreover, they approved plans to inform their

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<sup>1</sup>For a study of the racial views of Protestant sects in the middle and lower class segments of southern society see David Edwin Harrell, Jr., White Sects and Black Men (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1971).



respective congregations of any attempt to integrate the races in the Southern Methodist Church.<sup>2</sup>

Segregationists were aware of the fact that each major denomination had a few ministers who viewed the race question in moral terms and sought to promote gradual reform. These ministers had to overcome three major barriers. First, the church as an institution was unable to relinquish completely its role as protector of the status quo. Second, widespread sentiment against racial change existed throughout all levels of southern society. Finally, formidable groups manipulated public opinion against change and subjected those who questioned established values and practices to vilification or violence. Because of these barriers, ministers met with little success when their accomplishments are measured in terms of actual changes in established practices that discriminated against black southerners. However, they did succeed in forcing religious institutions to become more aware of and give more consideration to the moral implications of a system that violated basic human rights and Christian doctrine. An editorial in the Christian Century described the dilemma facing the church:

A much more tormenting struggle is now taking place within the soul of the white Christian church. What is merely a dilemma for the nation is an agony for the church. This is so because in the church the principles of human dignity and equality are accepted not merely as humanitarian ideals to strive for but as divine imperatives which God commands his children

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<sup>2</sup>New York Herald Tribune, December 15, 1954.



to obey. Yet it is in the white church that these commands, so far as the Negro is concerned, are most flagrantly disobeyed.<sup>3</sup>

Ministers who recognized the moral issue inherent in the caste system often lacked the courage to state their position openly and were unwilling to place themselves in opposition to the prevailing consensus. Most of them were native southerners who shared a suspicion of social change that was common in the region's political thought; few engaged in direct action such as sit-ins and demonstrations. John Morris, an Episcopal minister and social activist, observed that white ministers who participated in the major civil rights demonstrations were largely from northern churches.<sup>4</sup> Those few southern white ministers who did support the movement generally limited their social objectives to abolishing segregation; they did not concern themselves with the economic structures underlying white racism. Nevertheless, segregationists believed that the social and political views of pro-integrationist ministers constituted a real danger to society and attacked them as such.

The House Un-American Activities Committee provided whites committed to segregation and racism with one of their strongest arguments against liberal ministers. In 1948, HUAC released a report entitled "100 Things You Should Know

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<sup>3</sup>"The Agony of the Church," Christian Century, October 10, 1962, pp. 1215-16.

<sup>4</sup>Interview with John Morris, Atlanta, Ga., April 22, 1975.



About Communist Infiltration in the Churches."<sup>5</sup> The report charged that the Communist party was assigning its members to join churches and church organizations. It further claimed that party members were told "to take control where possible, and in any case to influence thought and action toward Communist ends."<sup>6</sup> The report caused considerable concern among various church officials because it questioned their loyalty as well as the ability of the church to resist the alleged infiltration. The Council of the Bishops of the Methodist Church issued a formal denial of the charges and commented on the report's influence: "The apparent effect of the report is to create the impression that the churches have been infiltrated by Communists and that responsible leaders of the churches follow the party line."<sup>7</sup>

The denials did not alter the fact that a congressional committee had raised serious doubts in the minds of many people about subversion in organized religion. That these doubts were raised at a time when northern Protestant denominations were questioning the morality of racial desegregation was not lost on southern whites. Thus, the committee, dominated as it was by conservative republicans and southern democrats, furnished the segregationist fundamentalists with an important ideological weapon to use against

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<sup>5</sup>The New York Times, November 23, 1948.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>The New York Times, December 5, 1948.



those individuals in the church who sought an end to racial discrimination and segregation.

In 1953 HUAC again attempted to associate clergymen who advocated social reforms with internal subversion and conspiracy. From the early days of the cold war, government investigating agencies had employed witnesses who claimed expertise in the areas of communist infiltration. In September of 1953, HUAC employed this technique to discredit organized religion and individual ministers. The committee released testimony of government-paid witnesses who claimed that some 600 clergymen were part of a plot to destroy religion by communist infiltration and replace it with atheism.<sup>8</sup> A considerable portion of the witnesses' testimony attempted to demonstrate not only that religious groups were infiltrated by subversion, but that the groups had in turn become instruments of infiltration to promote communist aims. A key witness was J. B. Matthews, a former communist who had assumed the role of professional investigator exposing the dangers of infiltration. In addition to his congressional testimony, Matthews published an article in the American Mercury charging that Protestant clergymen comprised the largest single group supporting the communist cause.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>The New York Times, September 12, 1953.

<sup>9</sup>J. B. Matthews, "Reds in Our Churches," American Mercury, July, 1953, Vol. LXXVII, 3-13. For a detailed assessment of the House Committee's methods see the comments of Methodist Bishop of Washington, G. Bromley Oxnam, The Washington Post, April 5, 1953. Also see The New York Times, July 22, 1953.



Matthews' assertions found a large audience not only among the members of fundamentalist churches, but also among members of more liberal denominations such as the Presbyterian and the Episcopalian. The Rev. G. T. Gillespie, president of Belhaven College in Jackson, Mississippi, was one of the most prominent Protestant spokesmen for white supremacy. A leader in the Southern Presbyterian Church, he strongly defended segregation, saying that it could be justified on biblical grounds and was not "unchristian."<sup>10</sup> Gillespie was the epitome of respectability and, when compared to his contemporaries, could not be considered an extreme racist. Yet, he too linked the race issue to the cold war.

He wrote:

A very considerable part of the violent agitation against segregation stems from sources outside the negro [sic] race, and outside of America, and coincides with the worldwide movement for racial amalgamation which has its fountainhead in Moscow.<sup>11</sup>

He believed that the crux of the race issue was "a choice between the Anglo-Saxon ideal of racial integrity maintained by a consistent application of the principle of segregation, and the Communist goal of amalgamation . . . ."<sup>12</sup>

The Citizens Council widely publicized the assertions of HUAC and Gillespie. The link between the race issue and internal subversion became the mainstay in the Council's

<sup>10</sup> See The Rev. G. T. Gillespie, D.D., A Christian View on Segregation (Winona: Association of Citizens' Councils, 1954).

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.



propaganda assault on reform. The organization required a threat more ominous than integration per se to justify the tactics it employed. Its members did not hesitate to intimidate or to direct reprisals against church groups or individual ministers who suggested that the South should look for an alternative to racial segregation. In December of 1955 the Citizens Council attacked the National Council of Churches (NCC) when it urged church bodies to reassign five ministers who had recently been forced to resign because of their objection to segregation. This stance prompted the Citizens Council to charge that the NCC had become a political instrument of Soviet policy:

The unfortunate aspect of the political activities of N.C.C. is that all its influence is directed toward carrying out proposals sponsored by the Reds and which are against the unity, safety, and security of the United States.<sup>13</sup>

In 1956, the New Orleans Citizens Council invited Governor Marvin Griffin of Georgia, one of the organization's strongest supporters, to address a rally where he and other speakers harangued a crowd of some 4,000 people. Besides the usual charges against the Supreme Court, the segregationists strongly denounced Catholic Archbishop Joseph Rummel of New Orleans for his pro-integration views. Shortly thereafter, a wooden cross was burned in the yard of the archbishop's home.<sup>14</sup> A similar incident occurred in Rock

<sup>13</sup> Citizens' Council, Vol. I, No. 7, April, 1956, p. 1.

<sup>14</sup> Southern School News, June, 1956.



Bill, South Carolina, where a cross was burned in front of St. Anne's Catholic School, the only integrated school in the state. The Rock Hill Ministerial Union passed a singularly moderate resolution which stated: "Such acts . . . are the work of men of ill will and ought to be opposed by all right-minded citizens."<sup>15</sup> But, in fact, to be "right-minded" in the Deep South meant that one had to defend segregation and denounce those who opposed it. As a result, incidents of violence and intimidation against blacks and their allies were commonplace.

The few ministers who advocated racial equality and open worship services often expected reprisals and prepared for them. But even those who simply advocated racial tolerance as some vague form of "brotherhood" also found themselves coming under harsh criticism from their congregations. The Rev. Robert B. McNeil, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Columbus, Georgia, was censured by the Presbytery of Southwest Georgia after he wrote a magazine article urging "creative contacts" between the races. The Rev. Roy C. Delamottes, a white Methodist minister, protested a resolution by Mississippi Methodists urging continued segregation. As a result, no Mississippi congregation would accept him as minister. Elders of the Durant, Mississippi, Presbyterian Church fired the Rev. March Calloway because he spoke

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., February, 1957.



against the Citizens Council.<sup>16</sup> In an essay published in 1959, Ralph McGill vividly described the plight of these ministers:

pressure from some of the congregational leaders, ostracism and obstruction, repeated telephone calls in the dead of night, ugly, whispered filth, threats of violence and death . . . these are all part of a pattern familiar to the ministers of Southern churches who try to take the attitude of tolerance required by Christianity, the ethics of Western civilization, the Constitution and courts of the United States and their own national church organizations.<sup>17</sup>

Three years later an essay in Christian Century indicated that the situation remained unchanged:

In the wake of agitation from radical right-wing groups, a plague of anonymous telephone calls, poison-pen letters and threats to cancel church pledges has become the daily portion of some Protestant ministers.<sup>18</sup>

It should be emphasized that actions such as these were not perpetrated solely by the lower-class segregationists but by influential citizens as well. Individuals involved in or supporting reprisals came from all classes and included governors as well as Klansmen, bankers as well as

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<sup>16</sup> Intimidation, Reprisal, and Violence in the South's Racial Crisis, pp. 12-13. Also see Jackson Daily News, June 21, 1955 and Jackson Clarion-Ledger, November 30, 1955.

<sup>17</sup> Ralph McGill, "The Agony of the Southern Minister," The New York Times Magazine, September 27, 1959.

<sup>18</sup> Robert Lee, "Social Sources of the Radical Right," Christian Century, May 9, 1962, pp. 595-97. The National Council of Churches conducted a survey in 1963 which revealed that the single most disruptive charge made by extremists against churches was that many clergymen were either communists or communist sympathizers. See the Atlanta Constitution, April 20, 1963.



small farmers, Presbyterians as well as fundamentalist Baptists. Although Ralph McGill did not state explicitly that the effort to preserve segregation was in large part an attempt to preserve the class privileges of a white elite, he did make guarded statements in that direction. In 1959, he wrote:

Ministers are squeezed between the dictates of conscience and church policy on the one hand, and the prejudices of those who run the church on the other . . . . Every minister with any shred of awareness sees that, just as the racial issue is the greatest political issue before the world today, so it is for Christianity.<sup>19</sup>

Most southern whites who belonged to the political elite worked diligently to promote and maintain a segregationist consensus among their constituents. Speeches, press releases, and policy decisions reflected the spirit of massive resistance and gave the impression that a united white South was prepared to exert every possible effort to preserve segregation as a way of life. At times members of the elite became personally involved in internal church affairs to promote their political views. In 1955, the Rev. George J. Stafford, pastor of the First Baptist Church in Batesburg, South Carolina, was forced to leave his church following a dispute with the board of deacons over racial segregation. South Carolina Governor George Bell Timmerman, Jr., was a member of the church and his father, United States District Judge George Bell Timmerman, was chairman of the church's

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<sup>19</sup> McGill, "The Agony of the Southern Minister."



board of deacons. Both men had actively promoted segregation; Judge Timmerman admitted that the board of deacons had found the minister's racial views unacceptable.<sup>20</sup>

McGill, commenting on a similar forced resignation of a Baptist minister in Macon, Georgia, observed:

The Christian Church cannot forever proceed with platitudes and irrelevancies, with fiddle-faddle with operating high rich country club churches which are almost totally unrelated to the lives of the people, echoing with cliches and prescriptions for peace of mind.<sup>21</sup>

Thus, influential middle and upper class members of Protestant churches were those mainly responsible for preserving the segregationist consensus. They argued that ministers' sermons should remain free of political and social concerns. They maintained that the race issue was basically a secular question best dealt with outside the church. These attitudes were not surprising considering the fact that Protestant denominations in the region had little experience or sympathy with the social gospel.

However, large numbers of whites did, in fact, support ministers who fervently combined political and religious issues. These anti-communist evangelists, operating largely outside institutional structures, successfully preached a perverted brand of nationalism throughout the region. They identified segregation, capitalism, and anti-communism with

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<sup>20</sup>The New York Times, November 2, 13, 1955.

<sup>21</sup>"The Agony of the Church," Christian Century, October 10, 1962, p. 1215.



the will of God and maintained that the future of the nation depended on their followers' willingness to defend these and other traditional values. Perhaps the best known of these evangelists were Billy James Hargis and Fred Schwartz, who successfully led revivals throughout the South preaching the virtues of Christ and anti-communism. Hargis's Christian Crusade and Schwartz's Christian Anti-Communist Crusade were similar in the message they disseminated as well as in their capacity to attract crowds and accumulate revenues.

In addition to his Christian Crusade, Hargis conducted an "Anti-Communist Leadership School" in Tulsa where he constantly assailed liberals as instruments of communism.<sup>22</sup> In letters to his followers in the South, Hargis claimed that "leftist negro ministers" had joined the communists in their attempt to set blacks against whites. He singled out Martin Luther King, Jr. as "a chief agitator" who had "subversive affiliations" and a "communist front record."<sup>23</sup>

National church leaders regarded segregationist and anti-communist fundamentalists as threats not only to the denominations which drew from the middle and upper classes but to those which attracted the lower classes as well. One church observer commented:

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<sup>22</sup>See Harold H. Martin, "Doomsday Merchant of the Far Far Right," The Saturday Evening Post, April 28, 1962, pp. 19-25.

<sup>23</sup>Billy James Hargis, letters to his supporters, 1961, Southern Regional Council files, Atlanta, Ga.



One of the most disturbing features of the current revival of the political right in the United States is its apparently cordial marriage with religion . . . . One wonders whether people like Billy James Hargis and Fred Schwartz will not compromise fundamentalism so seriously that in large regions of the country it will no longer be recognizable as religion.<sup>24</sup>

Clearly, anti-communism in the Deep South constituted more than just a political position. For most of the segregationist fundamentalists it was a religious tenet as well, and their political utterances revealed the intensity usually associated with religious zealots. They commonly referred to their opponents as "Godless communists" as they stressed the inroads subversives had made among the Protestant clergy. Their beliefs have been described succinctly by Richard Horchler, who wrote:

The anti-Communist fundamentalists equate liberal Protestantism of any sort with a plot to transform 'true' Christianity into a vehicle for Marxism. Since their true Christianity is essentially identical with that of 19th century rural America, they find evidence of the plot in any departures from laissez-faire free enterprise, literal interpretation of the Bible and White Anglo-Saxon Protestant supremacy; conversely, ministers who support the 'social gospel,' who are sympathetic to theological modernism, religious pluralism, racial integration, ecumenism, internationalism, are clearly--in the radical-right formula--considered supporters of a liberalism, 'which leads to Socialism, which leads to Communism.' Thus the conclusion that vast numbers of clergymen are pro-Communist . . . . Baptist Billy Hargis and Baptist Robert Welch have made room in their organizations for avowed white supremacists, and there are distinct racist overtones in

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<sup>24</sup>Edwyn A. Smith, "Rightism: Revivalism Revived," Christian Century, November 14, 1962, pp. 1385-87.



the radical extremists' attacks on the Supreme Court and the civil rights and integration movements.<sup>25</sup>

Despite intense pressures generated by the anti-communist, segregationist consensus, a few ministers spoke openly against segregation, and their courage inspired some of their more cautious colleagues. In some southern cities small groups, comprised mostly of ministers, organized to work for gradual integration. Some of these groups were biracial and assumed the title of "councils on human relations."<sup>26</sup> Believing that their close church affiliation would give them a legitimacy that otherwise would be lacking, the councils publicized their church ties and emphasized the various official church positions against segregation. For example, in 1957, the Birmingham Council on Human

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<sup>25</sup> Richard Horchler, Anti-Communism, the Extreme Right and the Church (New York: National Council of Christians and Jews, June, 1962), p. 2.

<sup>26</sup> At the time these groups were formed they generated considerable enthusiasm among northern observers of the southern racial scene. Eager for the least indication of a change in attitudes, they tended to overestimate the importance of ministers in shaping race relations. One such observer noted:

A powerful voice is being raised in the South against segregation. It belongs to the preachers, pleading with his people for 'moderation' on the race issue, at the very least, and in some cases telling them flatly segregation is morally wrong and must be abandoned. Individual clergymen have spoken out for integration in the past . . . but until recently the majority of Southern preachers has remained silent on segregation. Now, that pattern is changing sharply . . . All over the South, clergymen are playing leading roles in interracial groups working for integration.

"Religion and Race," Wall Street Journal, February 14, 1958.



relations, under the leadership of a young Methodist minister, compiled and circulated a report on the specific responses of various church organizations to the Supreme Court decision. All the responses urged compliance with the law and most stated that segregation was morally unjustifiable.<sup>27</sup>

A similar bi-racial group of eighty Atlanta ministers met in 1957 and issued a statement known as "The Atlanta Manifesto." The statement constituted a direct challenge to the more flagrant abuses of organizations such as the Klan and Citizens Council. It listed several principles that the ministers considered essential to the solution of the region's racial problems. The manifesto recognized the existing threat to free speech and urged that it be challenged; it urged that the law be obeyed and the public school system maintained; it urged tolerance for those of other races and for those who held different racial views; and finally, it urged that communication be maintained between leaders of both races.<sup>28</sup>

In the same year a group of white Protestant South Carolina ministers, considered to hold moderate social and political views, compiled a book of essays entitled South Carolinians Speak in which they demonstrated a general concern about the problems surrounding the race issue.

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<sup>27</sup> "Religious Bodies and the Supreme Court Decision" (Birmingham: The Birmingham Council on Human Relations, July 31, 1957), Southern Regional Council files, Atlanta, Ga.

<sup>28</sup> Atlanta Constitution, November 3, 6, 1957.



Specifically, they expressed alarm at the insistent demands of whites for conformity on the race question. The introductory essay observes that, "The current racial dilemma is producing a threat to one of the basic institutions of American democracy--the right of the individual to freedom of thought, opinion and speech."<sup>29</sup> A recurrent theme in these essays is that communism would benefit most from racial tension, repressive legislation, and any constitutional crisis that might arise if states resorted to "Interposition"--namely, assume their sovereignty and pass legislation to prevent integration.<sup>30</sup>

The civil rights movement clearly forced many clergymen to confront their consciences on the race issue. Those who headed middle class churches exhibited particular concern; however, despite their growing sensitivity, they usually limited their activities to appeals for tolerance and obedience to the law. Few committed themselves totally to activities designed to bring an immediate end to separatist practices and the laws that supported them. Instead, they involved themselves mainly with the effects of the civil rights movement on their own role as ministers. They strongly objected to demands for conformity that limited their freedom of

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<sup>29</sup> Ralph E. Cousins, Joseph R. Horn, III, et al., South Carolinians Speak: A Moderate Approach to Race Relations (Dillon, S.C., by the Authors, 1957), p. v.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 30. For Mississippi Governor Ross Barnett's view of interposition see Southern School News, IX, October, 1962, p. 10.



speech in the pulpit, and they denounced the hostility and abuse experienced by some of their colleagues whose positions were less than rigidly segregationist. Thus, the main purpose of their action apparently was to preserve the freedoms traditionally accorded them and to maintain their own status as influential community spokesmen. Perhaps for this reason, even the churches of liberal ministers, with a few exceptions, remained closed to blacks. The risks of advocating and practicing integration were simply too great.

As the race issue came to the fore in the mid-fifties and moderate ministers assessed their positions, they influenced the central organizations of their respective denominations to confront the issue also. The denominations, facing a dilemma because of the split between the congregations of many churches and their more moderate ministers, in theory had to support their ministerial spokesmen. In June of 1954, the Southern Baptist Convention, representing the largest denomination in the South, declared that the Supreme Court's decision outlawing segregated schools "is in harmony with the Constitutional guarantee of equal freedom to all citizens, and with the Christian principles of equal justice and love for all men."<sup>31</sup> Hence, in this first important statement on the issue of integration, the Baptists took the official position that there was nothing inherently evil in the Court's decision. Although they stopped far short of

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<sup>31</sup>"Religious Bodies and The Supreme Court Decision," p. 2.



advocating an immediate end to segregated schools, the endorsement of the Court's ruling angered many white Baptists and resulted in increased pressures on local ministers by the resisting forces.

As the segregationists organized their opposition to racial integration, some moderate ministers turned to their respective church officials for practical as well as moral support. But the hierarchies of the various southern Protestant denominations were reluctant to denounce explicitly racial segregation or to require the elimination of the practice in individual churches. This vacillation and equivocation on the part of church officialdom caused consternation among those ministers who viewed the race issue in moral terms. They realized that they could not always depend on the denomination's leadership to support a crusade against segregation. As one Methodist minister observed:

It is ironical that while the Supreme Court of the United States, from time to time renders great decisions which make for real Americanism and democracy, the Methodist Church is holding on to a system that gives ecclesiastical sanction to racism and segregation.<sup>32</sup>

Although the church hierarchies proved hesitant about dealing forthrightly with their own institutional racism and exclusionist practices, at times they did express strong concern over the denunciations and pressures that segregationists placed on individual ministers who openly denounced the

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<sup>32</sup>Earl H. Crampton, "The Central Jurisdiction Is Not Necessary," The Pastor, July, 1955, p. 4.



caste system. For example, in 1957, the Southern Baptist Convention issued a statement deploring the persecution of ministers for their racial views. Significantly, the statement did not contain a strong indictment of racial segregation. Rather, it stated vaguely that racial prejudice was contrary to the will of God:

We are witnessing today the betrayal of freedom by vocal minorities in some communities and churches who are able to arouse sufficient opposition to force the resignation of pastors and to incite retaliation against peaceful citizens who speak or act according to their convictions on racial justice and interracial goodwill. The people of our region and throughout our land should be reminded that both the voice of God and the verdict of history warn us that those who deny these freedoms to others do not long retain them for ourselves.<sup>33</sup>

The various church hierarchies vigorously defended themselves against charges that their denominations were infiltrated by communists--that their moderate ministers were "communist dupes"--for these assertions undermined the authority and legitimacy of the church as an institution. In response to these charges, church officials published articles and released statements denying that their clergymen were disloyal or engaged in subversive activities. In 1961, the Methodist Church published a booklet which stated that less than one percent of Methodist ministers belonged to organizations listed as subversive by the attorney general.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup>49th Annual Report of the Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention (Chicago: Southern Baptist Convention, 1957).

<sup>34</sup>See Philip Wogoman, "The Methodist Minister and Communism: The Truth Behind the Charges," Christian Advocate, March 30, 1951.



The National Council of the Protestant Episcopal Church critically assessed individuals and groups that made charges of communism against the clergy.<sup>35</sup> The United Christian Missionary Society and the United Presbyterian Church published similar booklets, as did the Catholic Church.

By this time, some churches were beginning to confront their detractors in more assertive ways. For example, in 1962 the Augusta, Georgia Chronicle-Herald denounced a meeting of civil-rights workers at a community center sponsored by the Methodist Church. The meeting included Ann Braden, a civil rights activist, whose husband, Carl Braden, was at that time in prison for refusing to cooperate with a congressional investigation. Instead of yielding to the criticism and firing the director of the center, the Methodist Church defended her right to meet with whom she chose. In a letter to the Chronicle-Herald, Bishop John Owen Smith stated:

The Methodist Church does not scare very easily at this point . . . . The Methodist Church is up to its ears in the fight against Communism. Nonetheless, it prays that it may not get arrogant, tyrannical, or Communistic in the scrap to win.<sup>36</sup>

The Catholic Church shared the dilemma faced by the Protestant denominations--the majority of white southerners, regardless of their religious affiliation, could not accept the idea that a social system based on racial segregation

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<sup>35</sup>"Sowing Dissension in the Churches," National Council of Protestant Episcopal Church, Department of Social Relations, Southern Regional Council files, Atlanta, Ga., undated.

<sup>36</sup>The Augusta Chronicle-Herald, February 25, 1962.



violated Christian doctrine. However, in contrast with most protestant churches, the Catholic Church refused to dodge the moral implications of segregation and forthrightly confronted its membership with the issue. As Reinhold Niebuhr pointed out, Catholic bishops supported priests who advocated racial equality, but the Protestant congregations were free to dismiss their clergy when they criticized traditional race customs.<sup>37</sup>

Because the Catholic Church had a larger membership in Louisiana than in the other Deep South states, the events in that state best reflect the approach of southern Catholics to the race issue. As early as 1950, Catholic students came out in favor of racial integration. A representative group of students from five Catholic colleges stated: "Many of us white students in Southern Catholic colleges have come to the conclusion that integration is both welcome and inevitable."<sup>38</sup> Anticipating that their loyalty would be questioned, they specifically rejected the association of racial change with communism: "The amazing notion here is that you must be Red if you are in favor of complete Christianity."<sup>39</sup>

The Catholic hierarchy took a similarly forthright approach to racism in the church but encountered strong

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<sup>37</sup> Reinhold Niebuhr, "A Theologian's Comments on the Negro in America," The Reporter, November 29, 1956, pp. 24-25.

<sup>38</sup> "Southern Collegians Reject Racism," The Catholic World, December, 1950, p. 6.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.



resistance. As late as 1955, some predominantly white churches reserved sections of their pews for black members and required them to wait at the end of the line for Holy Communion. Deploring such practices, a Catholic journal observed:

There is no way to duck the plain truth that among Catholics in some sections of the South there is a strong opposition, despite church teaching, to action to end segregation. In Louisiana some proclaim openly their disagreement with the whole idea of integration.<sup>40</sup>

The New Orleans archdiocese, largest in the South, made a concerted attempt to gain acceptance among its members for desegregation of its parochial schools. In 1956, Archbishop Joseph Francis Rummel wrote an open letter to all Catholics in the diocese describing racial segregation as "morally wrong and sinful." He characterized arguments favoring segregation as "for the most part unwarranted generalizations."<sup>41</sup> The archbishop's letter was followed by an editorial in the archdiocese newspaper warning that persons who supported laws to prevent integration in Catholic schools would be subject to automatic excommunication.

The archbishop's efforts to break the segregation barrier proved largely futile. Strong opposition from all segments of Louisiana society, including Catholics, prevented the church from opening its schools to black children. The

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<sup>40</sup> Charles Lucy, "Bishops in the South Lead Off," The Catholic Light, July 23, 1955.

<sup>41</sup> New Orleans Times Picayune, February 20, 1956.



most effective resistance to desegregation came from the Louisiana state legislature. Moreover, the New Orleans mayor and business elite gave no support to those school officials, Protestant or Catholic, who sought to proceed with desegregation. In 1960, when a federal judge ordered desegregation in the public schools, the Citizens Council promoted a boycott of the schools, and a roving mob attacked blacks in the streets.<sup>42</sup> The Church maintained its position despite the resistance and violence, but the politics of racism proved stronger than the influence of the Catholic leadership in Louisiana.

In 1955, Catholic Bishop John J. Russell of South Carolina took a strong stand against the harassment and intimidation of blacks in that state. Segregationists had applied economic pressure to blacks who signed petitions urging school desegregation. In Orangeburg, a number of these petitioners had lost their jobs. And in nearby Charleston, segregationists published the names of petitioners in a local newspaper which urged its white readers to "study carefully" the list of names.<sup>43</sup> Bishop Russell spoke out strongly against these methods of economic coercion. He described them as "morally wrong and sinful," and further stated that "No Catholic can conscientiously have part in

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<sup>42</sup>For a more detailed summary of the New Orleans school crisis see Francis M. Wilhoit, The Politics of Massive Resistance (New York: George Braziller, 1973), pp. 183-91.

<sup>43</sup>Atlanta Constitution, October 15, 1955.



such unjust practices."<sup>44</sup>

As Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish religious leaders denounced the tactics of segregationist fundamentalists and "extreme rightists," they too sometimes associated their opponents with communist advancement. This practice was more than a matter of rhetoric, for anti-communist sentiment was sufficiently strong that, regardless of a person's views, there existed a tendency to identify the opposition either as communists or communist dupes. Although the assertions of the racial moderates were not as strident as those of the segregationists, they too at times charged those who disagreed with their respective positions with assisting communism. For example, Archbishop Rummel said that pro-segregationists should ask themselves "whether or not they are really acting as genuine Americans or whether they are doing the work of those striving to introduce the principles of atheism and infidelity and the principles of Communism into the United States."<sup>45</sup> Similarly, in South Carolinians Speak the Reverend John Clyde Barrington, Presbyterian minister in Dillon, South Carolina, made a connection between advocating segregation and communism. He wrote:

There is no justification for the charge that the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People is Communist-controlled, or that it is forced upon Negroes of the South. World Communism would

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> New Orleans Times Picayune, February 27, 1956.



have a better chance if we kept legal segregation and even more restrictions on civil rights for Negroes.<sup>46</sup>

Finally, the American Jewish Committee published a "Statement on the Ultra-Right" asserting that those on the extreme right operated like the communists in the methods they used to spread fear and distrust:

We recognize the right of all citizens to be heard on any issue. But the extreme Rightists, no less than the Communists go beyond the prerogative; they sow fear and dissension, spreading distrust of friend and neighbor . . . . Indiscriminate name calling and smearing of public officials, private citizens, and even religious leaders are weapons long used by the Communists . . . . In customary Communist style (the extreme Rightists) pack meetings and outnumber, outshout, and outlast their opponents; they create disguised front organizations to snare the innocent and trap the unwary; they are relentless in defamation and harassment.<sup>47</sup>

The Jewish Committee's statement constitutes an accurate evaluation of the fundamentalists' approach to domestic politics. Nonetheless, these and similar pronouncements clearly demonstrate how basic political and social issues became obscured by the importance placed on the communist issue during this period. The political elite had joined the extreme right in order to exploit that issue more successfully. For them, anti-communism had become the sine qua non of massive resistance. Groups and individuals who opposed the segregationist-anti-communist alliance pointed

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<sup>46</sup>Cousins and Horn, eds., South Carolinians Speak, p. 68.

<sup>47</sup>"Statement on the Ultra-Right," adopted by the American Jewish Committee, January 19-21, 1962. Southern Regional Council files, Atlanta, Georgia.



out the similarities between its political methods and those of the communists. Hence, social reform became even more difficult to achieve as the communist issue increasingly dominated the domestic politics of reformers and non-reformers alike.

The political alliance between the segregationists and the radical right caused concern among religious organizations that had traditionally supported social change. The American Jewish Committee obviously regarded the fundamentalist movement as a serious threat to civil liberties. In 1962, David Danzig published an article in Commentary entitled "The Radical Right and the Rise of the Fundamentalist Minority." It was an incisive critique of the sociopolitical origins and influences of the fundamentalists. Emphasizing that their apocalyptic conception of a world divided into the opposing forces of good and evil had often been adopted by reactionary political forces, Danzig wrote:

Fundamentalism today supports a super-patriotic Americanism; the conflict with Communism is not one of power blocs but of faiths, part of the unending struggle between God and the devil. The danger of Communism, therefore, is from within--from the corrosion of faith by insidious doctrine.<sup>48</sup>

Although Danzig did not develop the idea, he touched on a vital link between fundamentalist and segregationist thought. For many whites in the Deep South, racial segregation was the will of God; social equality for blacks

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<sup>48</sup>David Danzig, "The Radical Right and the Rise of the Fundamentalist Minority," Commentary, April, 1962, p. 292.



violated not only their racial prejudices but their distorted religious beliefs as well. This perspective accounts, in large part, for the religious fervor common to the resistance movement. Church-affiliated racial moderates were viewed as instruments of evil because they advocated an "insidious doctrine" of racial justice. This fundamentalist perspective was not limited to a single religious denomination or social class; neither were its anti-communist elements. Instead, it appealed to the exaggerated racial, sectional, and national sentiments of a cross section of whites.

I. W. Newby has shown that anti-Negro ideas have never totally dominated American social thought. A substantial body of dissent has existed to moderate the views of racial extremists, who became increasingly alienated from the prevailing opinion after 1930. Newby argues that "anti-Negro spokesmen lost their ideological hold on the American people long before the people were prepared to abandon race policies which anti-Negro ideas had justified."<sup>49</sup> The change Newby refers to occurred later in the Deep South than in other parts of the nation, but it did occur. It was reflected in the joint efforts of the political elite and the spokesmen for professional anti-communism, some of whom

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<sup>49</sup> I. W. Newby, Jim Crow's Defense: Anti-Negro Thought in America, 1900-1930 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1965), p. 199. For a detailed account of religious racism, see Chapter III.



could not be considered racial extremists. They accomplished what anti-black spokesmen could no longer achieve by themselves; they created a political climate overwhelmingly unreceptive to demands for racial change. By combining their respective ideologies, these two groups were able to exert a strong ideological hold on southern whites and to form a powerful political synthesis that obviated attempts by religious leaders to create an atmosphere conducive to basic social justice. Equally important, this synthesis reinforced the system based on white supremacy and the cold war consensus that equated social reform with subversion.



## CHAPTER VI

### EDUCATORS PRESSURED TO ACCEPT IDEOLOGICAL CONFORMITY

After 1954, school desegregation, more than any other race-related issue, served as the focal point of the civil rights struggle. Public education assumed a political and social significance it previously had lacked, and many educators, like ministers and labor leaders, found themselves under attack from the forces of resistance. Led by the Citizens Councils and various politicians, these forces effectively promoted the idea that to concede to integration was, in effect, conceding to the conspiratorial aims of subversives. As a means of resisting these aims, politicians united behind manifestos and interposition laws to avoid compliance with court rulings and federal legislation. The Citizens Councils flooded the South with racist propaganda and joined various anti-communist groups in denouncing integrated education and those who supported it. The resulting atmosphere proved conducive not only to fear and mistrust but to violence as well.

Although the South's segregated public education system had been challenged periodically during the first half of the twentieth century, the United States Supreme Court had given it a firm legal basis in the Plessy v. Ferguson



decision of 1896, when the "separate but equal" doctrine was formulated.<sup>1</sup> This doctrine retained its legal standing until the Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka decision on May 17, 1954. Three important social and political developments were most influential in leading to the Brown decision. First, blacks gained new political strength in the New Deal period and used that strength to obtain concessions from the Roosevelt administration, one of the most important of which was the establishment of the Fair Employment Practices Committee. Second, individuals and organizations increasingly looked to the courts as a means of improving the status of blacks. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People relied heavily on the judicial system in the late 1940's and early 1950's in its fight to gain civil rights for blacks.<sup>2</sup> Third, the Truman administration established a Committee on Civil Rights which issued a widely publicized report in 1947 pointing up the disparities

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<sup>1</sup>Plessy v. Ferguson, 163 U.S. 537; 256 (1896). The Court ruled that a Louisiana statute providing "separate but equal" railway carriages for whites and blacks did not violate the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendments.

<sup>2</sup>Several landmark cases paved the way for the Brown decision. For example, in 1938, the Court declared that states providing legal education for white students had to provide legal education for black students, Missouri ex. rel. Gaines v. Canada, 305 U.S. 337 (1938). Then in 1950, the Court ruled that the University of Texas had to admit black students because the recently opened law school for blacks was substantially less than equal, Sweatt v. Painter, 339 U.S. 629 (1950); the Court further ruled that a state could not treat differently black students admitted to a formerly all-white graduate school, McLaurin v. Oklahoma State Regents, 339 U.S. 637 (1950).



between American democratic ideals and racial segregation.<sup>3</sup> Thus, both the judicial and executive branches of the federal government were demonstrating a slowly growing awareness of their legal and moral obligations to the nation's black population.

No group of individuals in the nation was more cognizant of the potential influence blacks might exert in regional and national politics than the political leadership of the Deep South. Court decisions such as those outlawing the white primary threatened established patterns of segregation, reinforced fears of forced integration, and promoted widespread resistance activities among many whites. The formation of the National State's Rights party in 1948 was a direct response to the Truman administration's limited effort to expand civil rights for blacks. However, resistance to civil rights did not end with the defeat of the Thurmond-Wright ticket. Rather, resistance efforts shifted from presidential politics to a united southern bloc in Congress and to the organization of segregationist groups at the local level.

Opposition to racial equality had long been the most salient concept in the region's political thought. During the cold war era the corollary idea developed that all supporters of integration were either subversives themselves

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<sup>3</sup>The President's Committee on Civil Rights, "To Secure These Rights," Washington, D.C., 1947.



or were individuals and groups whose goal was to subvert the system. Values or policies that differed from prevailing opinion often became targets of attack. Professional educators were viewed with particular mistrust in part because anti-intellectualism had long been a recurring theme in southern thought. However, the social tensions created by the combined effects of the cold war and racial change became the primary force behind a renewed hostility towards and a suspicion of educators and institutions of higher learning.

The legislative branch of the federal government directly contributed to the development of these attitudes. In December of 1948, HUAC issued a booklet entitled "Communism and Education" in which the committee claimed that an estimated eight hundred American communists served as officers of a secret army whose aim was to overthrow the United States government. The committee emphasized that many members of this secret army were educators.

The files of our Committee, running back over a ten year period, show that the Communists have always found the teaching group the easiest touch of all professional classes for actual party zealots and fellow travelers.<sup>4</sup>

In subsequent hearings, HUAC and SISS subpoenaed a relatively large number of educators to testify about their political affiliations. Attempting to discredit the witnesses, committee spokesmen emphasized the fact that a number of

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<sup>4</sup>Quoted in The New York Times, December 5, 1948.



those called to testify refused to cooperate fully with the committees.<sup>5</sup>

Southern political leaders in Congress participated in and supported the work of these two highly influential investigating committees. They realized that if they were to stop integration in the schools and elsewhere, they had to enlist the support of the majority of southerners. This meant, in effect, persuading the white middle class to resist all forms of integration. Since overt race baiting by this time was acceptable only to a relatively small segment of lower class whites, the politicians substituted red baiting to accomplish their ends. They not only rejected the Brown ruling but questioned the reasoning and motivation behind the decision. The result was a concerted attack on the Supreme Court's legitimacy as well as on the motives of the judges. Many critics of the Court, particularly those associated with the Citizens Councils, echoed the views of Senator Eastland who, as previously noted, linked the Brown decision to a world-wide communist conspiracy.<sup>6</sup> Eastland declared in the Senate that "the decision of the Supreme Court in the school segregation cases was based upon the writings and teachings of pro-Communist agitators and other

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<sup>5</sup>For a summary of the cases of educators who refused to answer some of the questions asked by SISS and HUAC investigators see the Christian Science Monitor, July 21, 1953.

<sup>6</sup>Discussed above, Chapter III, pp. 79-84.



enemies of the American form of government."<sup>7</sup>

Eastland's efforts were supplemented by those of his colleague in the Senate, Harry F. Byrd of Virginia. Byrd lacked the close organizational ties Eastland had to segregationist groups such as the Councils, but the Virginia senator was extremely instrumental in promoting the concept of massive resistance and enjoyed considerable support throughout the region. He believed that if the South could resist desegregation and simultaneously discredit those promoting it, public opinion would gradually shift against forcing change in the region. Byrd stated in 1956:

If we can organize the Southern states for massive resistance to this order, I think that in time the rest of the country will realize that racial integration is not going to be accepted in the South.<sup>8</sup>

Both Senators Eastland and Byrd were instrumental in gaining support for the "Southern Manifesto" which protested the Court's decision. Designed to demonstrate a unified opposition to school desegregation, the manifesto revealed the politicians' concern that alien forces were now exerting influence in areas traditionally regarded by whites as a private domain. Concerning the public schools, the manifesto stated:

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<sup>7</sup>U.S., Congress, Senate, Senator James Eastland's declarations on school desegregation cases and pro-Communist agitators, 84th Cong., 1st sess., May 26, 1955, Congressional Record, pp. 7120-24.

<sup>8</sup>Quoted in the Richmond Times-Dispatch, February 25, 1956.



Outside agitators are threatening immediate and revolutionary changes in our public school system. If done, this is certain to destroy the system of public education in some of the states.<sup>9</sup>

The wording of the manifesto closely resembled that used by proponents of the cold war. They too saw conspiratorial "outside agitators" presenting threats of "revolutionary" change which could only lead to the destruction of American institutions and values. The use of similar rhetoric by segregationists and professional anti-communists was a key factor in the growth and development of an ideology incorporating the views of the two groups. Thus, the alleged conspiracy influencing the Court's decision became a basic premise of the ideology of resistance. As such it served an extremely important function as a rationale for non-compliance with the law and resistance to change.

By 1956, according to a survey by the Southern Regional Council, some twenty pro-segregation groups had emerged in the South.<sup>10</sup> The Citizens Council, not generally considered a violence-prone organization, was the largest and most influential of these groups. Its stated goal was simply to maintain racial segregation, and it was willing to resort to quasi-legal or even illegal tactics to achieve this end. This approach was not regarded as extreme in the Deep South;

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<sup>9</sup>Quoted in Race Relations Law Reporter, Vol. I, 1956, p. 437. Also see Congressional Record, 84th Cong., 2nd sess. March 12, 1956, pp. 4459-64.

<sup>10</sup>Harold C. Fleming, "Resistance Movements and Racial Desegregation," The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science (March, 1956), pp. 44-57.



in fact the Council's goals and methods were shared by many political leaders. In 1956, for example, the South Carolina state legislature passed a resolution endorsing the formation of Citizens Councils in the state.<sup>11</sup> Commenting on the acceptability of massive resistance, one legal scholar observed in 1956:

Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, and South Carolina are using or contemplating use of every conceivable method of evading the May 17 decision of the Supreme Court of the United States, in open defiance of the Court. This position seems to be overwhelmingly supported by the executive and legislative branches of the government and by the majority of the people in these states, and, one might add, by the judiciary also.<sup>12</sup>

The segregationist consensus that surfaced among whites extended far beyond the traditional demands for adherence to the concepts of white supremacy. Penetrating all areas of southern life, it encompassed a broad ideology of resistance and included among its supporters individuals who were not primarily segregationists but who, nonetheless, regarded agitation for racial change as a manifestation of communist subversion. Many were professional anti-communists parading under various guises labeled as "conservative." William J. Simmons, executive secretary of the Jackson, Mississippi Citizens Council and a member of the John Birch Society,

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<sup>11</sup> Summary of Recent Segregation Laws in Southern States (Atlanta: Southern Regional Council, October, 1957).

<sup>12</sup> James H. Nabrit, Jr., "Legal Inventions and the Desegregation Process," The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science (March, 1956), p. 43. Also see Race Relations Law Reporter, Vol. I, April, 1956, pp. 437-47.



described his organization's appeal to these individuals:

I think the Citizens Council is much more than a white supremacist group. . . . I think it is fundamentally the first real stirrings of a conservative revolt in this country. . . . Some of the people who are attracted to this movement may not be concerned about the Negro. What would be classed as the old white supremacist movement has no place. It is too narrow.<sup>13</sup>

The Southern Regional Council, which estimated Citizens Council membership at 300,000 in 1956, noted in 1957 that total membership in the resistance movement had declined when all the southern states were considered.<sup>14</sup> However, in the states of the Deep South, segregationist forces enjoyed strong organized support and a relatively stable membership. The Southern Regional Council emphasized that the real strength of the resistance movement was in its access to and influence in the institutions of power and control:

State legislation, national opinion, attack against pro-integration forces, and increased restriction of the ballot, all indicate continuing unity and effectiveness among state White Citizens' Councils and related groups.<sup>15</sup>

Thus, a powerful and effective racial consensus in the states of the Deep South had made mass membership unnecessary. The Southern Regional Council report continued:

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<sup>13</sup> Quoted in Montgomery Advertiser, August 22, 1955. Other Council leaders also belonged to the John Birch Society. They included Louis Hollis, National Director, and Medford Evans, Managing Editor of the Citizen.

<sup>14</sup> Paul Anthony, Pro-Segregation Groups in the South (Atlanta: Southern Regional Council, 1957), p. 4.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.



In many of the Southern states the once clearly defined resistance group membership may well have been absorbed into the larger society. At no time since 1954 has public opinion been more akin to the expressed opinions of the White Citizens' Council.<sup>16</sup>

As the strategy of massive resistance demonstrated an ability to attract and maintain wide support, the fundamentalist segregationists embarked on an effort to win allies among non-southerners. The purpose of this campaign was to gain support not only from segregationists outside the South but also from all those individuals concerned about alleged subversive dangers growing out of the cold war. Once more, Senator Eastland was instrumental in initiating the effort. In 1958 he urged the white people of Mississippi to "lay your cases before the American people and you will be surprised to find out how similar their opinions are to those of your own."<sup>17</sup>

The Citizens Council adopted Eastland's plan, and employed a concerted propaganda campaign to enlist the support of segregationists and anti-communists outside the region. Louisiana State Senator W. M. Rainach, a Council member, published a full-page advertisement in the New York Herald-Tribune and other northern newspapers promoting a publication of the Louisiana Joint Legislative Committee entitled

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>Quoted in Helen Fuller, "Southerners and Schools," Part III, The New Republic, January 26, 1959, p. 10.



"Subversion in Racial Unrest." It directly linked the civil rights movement to "subversive" elements and was one of many attempts by the Council to exploit the anti-communist sentiment of non-southerners in order to gain their support in the struggle to maintain white resistance.<sup>18</sup>

As a part of the strategy to attract support from outside the South, Council members and other segregationists aligned with "radical right" groups whose primary political interest was not in preserving segregation but in promoting anti-communism. Based outside the South, both the John Birch Society and the Christian Anti-Communist Crusade enjoyed considerable support among southern whites. These organizations demanded rigid ideological conformity from educators and educational institutions because they viewed them as being particularly receptive to communist teachings. For example, Dr. Frederick C. Schwartz, leader of the Christian Anti-Communist Crusade, insisted that communism did not grow out of poverty, ignorance, and despair; rather, he maintained that it was rooted in the values of students and intellectuals. Consequently, much of the emphasis of Schwartz's anti-communism was directed at the student, the intellectual, and the university.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid. See p. 11.

<sup>19</sup>For a more detailed account of Schwartz's views see "The Case of Fred C. Schwartz," Facts, published by the Anti-Defamation League of B'Nai B'rith, November-December, 1962, Vol. 14, p. 253.



Anti-communist groups attracted support from white southerners for several reasons. First, many whites, particularly those with little education, readily accepted the idea that divisive and inimical foreign influences permeated American society. Second, some whites supported organizations such as the John Birch Society and Schwartz's Crusade for tactical reasons. By wrapping an anti-communist banner around the effort to maintain segregation, they gained a respectability and legitimacy that otherwise could not have been achieved. Finally, joining the professional anti-communists was a natural step for those who had long accused advocates of racial integration of being part of a conspiracy to undermine an entire way of life. Thus, the resistance ideology combined a deep-rooted, sociopolitical view with a keen pragmatic sense of how to promote that view most effectively within the unique context provided by the cold war.

For at least a decade, this combination proved highly effective as the political elite defeated attempts by moderate forces to break the segregation barrier. Because the rural areas were heavily segregationist, moderate opposition to the prevailing consensus was limited almost exclusively to the urban South. However, the economic and political leadership of the larger cities proved as vigorous in defending segregation as did its supporters in the rural areas. Whenever moderate groups attempted to challenge the consensus, they were usually either outmaneuvered and discredited



or intimidated and forced into a segregationist position.

The strength and effectiveness of the segregationists' tactics were clearly demonstrated in their campaign against the Southern Conference Education Fund (SCEF), the proclaimed goals of which were the elimination of segregation and other forms of racial discrimination. Following the Brown ruling, SCEF sponsored local forums on school desegregation in Houston, Richmond, and New Orleans. In 1955, it announced plans for a southwide conference the following year in Atlanta where political leaders unanimously opposed integrating the schools. The Atlanta elite strongly denounced SCEF's plans; by late 1955 public opposition had become so intense that moderates persuaded SCEF to cancel the conference.<sup>20</sup>

In New Orleans, SCEF circulated a petition asking the mayor to proclaim December 10-15, 1955, as Human Rights Week. Initially the mayor agreed and the school board gave permission to use a school auditorium for the forum. However, the Young Men's Business Club urged the citizens of New Orleans to boycott the forum. Citing the conclusions of Eastland's subcommittee investigation, club spokesmen

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<sup>20</sup>Interviews with Anne and Carl Braden, February 7, 1975, Atlanta, Ga. Almost ten years later opposition to integration remained particularly strong among Atlanta's public officials. As demands increased for a law outlawing discrimination in public accommodations, the Atlanta Board of Aldermen requested that HUAC come to Atlanta and look for communists in the integration movement. For a more detailed account of this request see "The Southern Patriot," February, 1964, p. 1.



claimed that the leaders of SCEF were communists. These charges undermined the conference and resulted in its failure.<sup>21</sup>

Governor Orval Faubus of Arkansas is an excellent example of a southern leader who, under other circumstances, might have taken a moderate position on the issue of school integration. Instead, he succumbed to political pressures exerted by Eastland and others and adopted a hard-line segregationist position. Faubus had attended Commonwealth College, a small Arkansas school which had a reputation for radicalism in the 1930's. When he ran for governor in 1954, his opponent cited Faubus's political involvement at Commonwealth and denounced him as a communist. He then came under attack by Eastland and the Citizens Council in 1956 for not taking a firmer stand against school integration. Eastland, in an important speech in Tupelo, Mississippi, pointed to Faubus as an example of a "border state" governor who lacked the courage to resist integration. Emphasizing the need for the southern states to remain unified in the face of northern pressures to integrate, Eastland stated that Faubus was capitulating to the forces of integration: "In Arkansas, where the governor will not take action against integration,

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid. The Young Men's Business Club had been instrumental in forcing the Southern Conference for Human Welfare to leave New Orleans in 1947. The club had used the same tactics of citing SCHW leaders as communists and relying on the hearings of HUAC for substantiation of the charges.



the state already has integration."<sup>22</sup>

Meanwhile, other political leaders from the Deep South joined Eastland's attempt to maintain a united resistance movement. Governor Marvin Griffin, addressing a group of Citizens Council members in Little Rock in August, 1957, praised them as "a courageous bunch of patriots." Citing his state as the example to follow, Griffin added that integration in Georgia would continue to be resisted because of "the determined and cooperative efforts of a dedicated people, a steadfast General Assembly and an administration committed unequivocally toward preservation of our cherished institutions."<sup>23</sup>

Faubus's decision to resist integration at Little Rock's Central High School in the fall of 1957 was, in effect, a reversal of his policy towards school integration. Following the riots at Central High, Faubus adopted the tactics of his former detractors and charged that "the Communists" helped "instigate" school integration at Little Rock. He singled out Lee and Grace Lorche, both of whom openly supported school integration, as examples of communists involved in the incident. Lee Lorche, a professor at Philander Smith College in Little Rock, had testified previously before HUAC, denying that he was a present member of the Communist party. Grace Lorche subsequently was called

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<sup>22</sup>Quoted in the Arkansas Gazette, April 28, 1956.

<sup>23</sup>Southern School News, September, 1957, p. 7.



before Eastland's Senate Internal Security Subcommittee where she was accused of past communist affiliation.<sup>24</sup>

Other considerations may have affected Faubus's capitulation to a hard-line position, but it seems clear that the major reasons were the political pressures applied by his colleagues and the growing influence of the resistance movement and its ideology.

The segregationist strategy of pressuring individuals to support resistance efforts and of questioning their loyalty if they objected proved to be extremely effective in a region where social and political dissent was regarded as dangerous to society. Those few whites who were willing to accept integration lacked support in their communities and had no organizational basis for advancing their views. Many of them were affiliated with educational institutions but, for the most part, those institutions were controlled by individuals who neither advocated racial change nor gave support to people who did. Consequently, most educators with moderate racial views remained silent rather than risk social ostracism, economic reprisals, and charges of disloyalty.

The Citizens Council assumed a leading role in gaining acceptability for the idea that communists had gained a

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<sup>24</sup> See the Arkansas Gazette, April 12, 1958. Lee Lorche refused to answer questions about prior affiliation with the Communist party. Grace Lorche had publicly befriended one of the black children turned away from Central High School by National Guardsmen.



stronghold in southern educational institutions which had to be exposed and resisted. In 1956, the Council's official publication stated in an editorial:

The Communist party today is making our colleges and universities their prime targets for infiltration. The governing bodies must screen faculty members and see to it that they teach only wholesome things, no matter how loudly they may prate about academic freedom, which in quite too many cases is only a camouflage for promulgation of dangerous doctrines.<sup>25</sup>

The Council singled out for attack educators who supported modifying or ending segregation. Dr. Charles S. Johnson, president of Fisk University, was accused by the Council of being affiliated with groups cited by HUAC as communist fronts.<sup>26</sup> Johnson had ties to the Southern Conference for Human Welfare, an organization whose members were among the most outspoken southerners advocating change. In attacking people such as Johnson, the Council again exploited the fact that most whites unquestionably accepted the charges made by HUAC. Thus, the Council was able to add credibility to its accusations by citing HUAC as the source of its information. This technique proved highly effective in shaping the attitudes of educated as well as less educated whites.

The Citizens Council engaged in an active propaganda and lobbying campaign among school teachers. In 1958, Councils in the Deep South followed the example set by the

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<sup>25</sup>The Citizens' Council, February, 1956.

<sup>26</sup>See The Citizens' Council, September, 1956.



Council of Fairfax County, Virginia, which circulated an open letter to Virginia teachers stating that the real issue they faced was not integration or the closing of the public schools but the survival of a way of life. The letter stated: "the issue is whether or not our system of American constitutional democracy is to survive."<sup>27</sup> The Council asserted that integration had to be resisted in order to prevent the onset of the "Socialistic millenium."<sup>28</sup>

The Citizens Council also engaged in direct action to achieve its ends. In Orangeburg, South Carolina, local blacks petitioned the school board to end racially segregated public schools. In response Council members organized an economic boycott against signers of the petition and against the local NAACP. Their maneuver was supported indirectly by the state's political leadership. When students and faculty at South Carolina State College supported a counter boycott, Governor George G. Timmerman, Jr., ordered the State Law Enforcement Division to keep them under surveillance. Some sixteen students were expelled and five faculty members dismissed for their role in the counter boycott.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Open letter from Edward A. Gibson and the Fairfax County Citizens Council to Virginia teachers, Atlanta, Ga., 1958, Southern Regional Council files.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Southern School News, September, 1955. Also see The Reporter Magazine, January 21, 1957.



Elsewhere the Citizens Council advocated secondary boycotts as a means of depriving blacks and their white sympathizers of jobs and credit. Roy V. Harris, president of the Georgia Citizens Council, urged his fellow segregationists to boycott all merchants who did not actively support racial segregation in the public schools and to defy all federal court rulings furthering racial integration. Harris described those advocating integration as "traitors and quislings."<sup>30</sup> A member of the Board of Regents of the University of Georgia, Harris tried to suppress the student newspaper stating it was "time to clean out all of these institutions of communist influences and the crazy idea of mixing and mingling of the races which was sponsored by the commie party."<sup>31</sup>

The intimidation techniques of the Council were, in some instances, adopted by state and local governmental institutions. For example, in 1953 the Georgia legislature established the Georgia Education Commission for the express purpose of maintaining segregated public schools. In 1957, the legislature granted the commission subpoena powers so that it could investigate teachers and also authorized it to prepare restrictive legislation on education.<sup>32</sup> In 1955,

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<sup>30</sup> Atlanta Constitution, September 22, 1958.

<sup>31</sup> Quoted in Neil R. Peirce, The Deep South States of America (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1974), p. 372.

<sup>32</sup> See "Summary of Recent Segregation Laws Enacted in Southern States," p. 2. Francis M. Wilhoit observes: "After 1955 Georgia's most influential proponents of massive



the Georgia Board of Education, whose members were either Council members or sympathetic to that organization's aims, unanimously adopted a resolution aimed at preventing racial integration in the public schools. It provided for automatic revocation of the teaching license and salary of any teacher "who supports, encourages, condones, offers to teach, or teaches" integrated classes.<sup>33</sup> The board further required that all teachers who belonged to the NAACP either resign from the organization or have their licenses revoked for life.<sup>34</sup>

The NAACP, which received much of its support in the South from members affiliated with black colleges, became the special target of segregationists. Following a precedent set by the federal government, the state of Louisiana had passed a law in 1950 requiring a number of organizations to submit membership lists to the state attorney general. Subsequently, the state filed suit against the NAACP to force it to disclose the names of its members.<sup>35</sup> The South

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resistance were the state government, county and local governments, the prestigious Commission on Education and the State's Rights Council. The influence of these agencies was enhanced by the fact that they all had overlapping membership." See Francis M. Wilhoit, The Politics of Massive Resistance (New York: George Braziller, 1973), p. 116.

<sup>33</sup> Race Relations in the U.S.A., 1954-1968, Kessing Research Report (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1970), p. 29.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid. For an assessment of state legislation restricting the rights of teachers to advocate integration or to belong to organizations that advocated integration see "Racial Integration and Academic Freedom," New York University Law Review, 34 (April, 1959), 725-52.

<sup>35</sup> Race Relations Law Reporter, Vol. I, June, 1956, p. 576.



Carolina legislature passed a law in 1956 providing for an investigation into activities of the NAACP at South Carolina State College. The law established an investigative committee empowered to subpoena witnesses "to determine what individuals at the college are members of and sympathizers with the NAACP."<sup>36</sup>

The segregationist consensus among whites was strengthened by restrictions limiting the degree to which teachers could safely dissent from prevailing racial opinions. Growing demands for political and social conformity were manifest not only in repressive legislation but also in policies of individual educators in positions of authority. Teachers who held dissenting racial views had to remain silent or lose their jobs. Not surprisingly, most remained silent; but a few refused to be intimidated. At the University of South Carolina, Dr. Chester C. Travelstead, Dean of the School of Education, spoke in favor of school integration and was dismissed from his position shortly afterwards.<sup>37</sup>

At Auburn University, assistant professor Bud R. Hutchinson lost his position because of a letter he wrote to the school paper taking issue with an editorial critical of integration. The American Association of University Professors censured Auburn and four other southern colleges for infringing on

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., pp. 600-01. Also see The Columbia State, October 15, 1955.

<sup>37</sup> Southern School News, January, 1956, p. 5. Also see the Charlotte Observer, November 24, 1955.



academic freedom by dismissing teachers because of their racial views.<sup>38</sup> These incidents played an important role in intimidating southern educators throughout the 1950's and into the early 1960's.

Thus, the activities of hard-core segregationists served to repress dissent and discredit moderate spokesmen of both races. Because white supremacists promoted their cause with the same moral fervor exhibited in some of their religious services the struggle against educators assumed distinct religious overtones. The extent of the segregationists' success can be judged by the fact that although integration occurred in the border states, the states of the Deep South rejected even token integration in the public schools until the early 1960's.<sup>39</sup> In Louisiana, five state colleges including Louisiana State University admitted a few black students, but as late as 1961 there was still no desegregation in the public schools of Alabama, Mississippi, or South Carolina. In January, 1961, two black students entered the University of Georgia under police protection, but university officials admitted them only because they were forced to do so by federal courts.

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<sup>38</sup> See Margaret Price, Intimidation, Reprisal and Violence in the South's Racial Crisis (Atlanta: Southern Regional Council, 1959), p. 11.

<sup>39</sup> As had been the case in Little Rock in 1957, riots occurred in New Orleans in 1960 when federal courts ordered school desegregation. For a description of events there, see New Orleans Times-Picayune, November 15, 1960.



Court orders requiring token desegregation were partially a result of the growing demands from blacks that the federal government take effective measures to end racial segregation. As black organizations attempted to pressure the federal government to act, particularly younger blacks, demonstrated a willingness to engage in direct confrontations with segregationists. For example, during the first four months of 1960, sit-in demonstrations occurred in some seventy-eight communities in the eleven-state South, and two thousand persons were arrested.<sup>40</sup>

The sit-in demonstrations and other forms of what Arthur I. Waskow has described as "creative disorder" added a new element to the civil rights struggle and aroused intense feelings of fear and hostility among southern whites.<sup>41</sup> Acts of civil disobedience appeared to many people, not all of whom were southerners, as a basic threat to the social

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<sup>40</sup>See The Student Protest Movement (Atlanta: Southern Regional Council, 1960). Although white southerners lacked total uniformity in their racial attitudes, Prothro and Matthews concluded that graduate levels of education were necessary to produce actual acceptance of integration. "Whites believe that the sit-ins were the result of 'outside agitation' rather than of genuine discontent over racial conditions: about half the explanations offered for the sit-ins by white segregationists and moderates . . . were along these lines. Next to the NAACP and the Communists, Northerners were the favorite culprits." Donald R. Matthews and James W. Prothro, Negroes and the New Southern Politics (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1966), p. 43.

<sup>41</sup>For a detailed account of the sit-ins and their effects see Arthur I. Waskow, From Race-Riot to Sit-Ins: 1919 and the 1960's (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1966), Chapter XII.



structure. To the segregationists the increasing strength of the black-white coalition and the new emphasis on voter registration were equally threatening. The more extreme among them resorted to terrorist attacks against individual blacks and their white allies. Many others rallied behind their political leadership which remained united in its opposition to integration. Still others renewed their support of local segregationists, anti-communist groups whose fundamentalist approach to political and social issues seemed to many whites to be the only available means of resisting radical change.

The liberal element in educational institutions and in national politics--those individuals who supported racial integration and government sponsored social welfare legislation--were alarmed by the effectiveness of the segregationist, anti-communist alliance. However, they considered the alliance, not as an outgrowth of the cold war consensus which they had helped create, but, rather, as the result of the fears of "ignorant whites." Writing in the New York Times, Alan Barth expressed the following position:

Southern segregationists have joined hands with the professional anti-Communists, ideologically as well as politically. . . . In many parts of the Deep South today, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People is regarded by ignorant whites as a Communist, or Communist-dominated agency. The close alliance between the White Citizens' Council on the one hand and the



John Birch Society and the Christian Anti-Communist Crusade on the other should not be ignored.<sup>42</sup>

The conservative element in national politics--those individuals who supported voluntary integration and opposed government sponsored social welfare programs--had a more direct role in supporting the ideology of fundamentalist segregationists. They consistently denounced the Brown decision as a step towards a communist type dictatorship. The National Review, the unofficial publication of American conservatism, stated:

For eight years Brown v. Board of Education has stood as the prime symbol of the drive toward a centralized despotic mass state that has been proceeding under the direction of a united front of federal executive and judiciary.<sup>43</sup>

One liberal response to this view charged the conservatives with "tarring the Supreme Court and the Presidency with language that properly applies to Communist governments and parties."<sup>44</sup> Others of indistinct political persuasion charged that liberals had been silent on the question of communism, thereby creating a vacuum into which moved right wing groups such as the John Birch Society and the various anti-communist crusades.<sup>45</sup> Thus, anti-communism had become

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<sup>42</sup>Alan Barth, "Report on the 'Rampageous Right,'" The New York Times Magazine, November 26, 1961, p. 25.

<sup>43</sup>The National Review, April 10, 1962.

<sup>44</sup>Irving Brant, "The Anti-Communist Hoax," New Republic, May 28, 1962, p. 18.

<sup>45</sup>See Harvey B. Schechter, "The Liberals Have Helped the Radical Right," The New York Times Magazine, April 29, 1962, pp. 13, 93-96.



ingrained in American political thought to the point that it was used by virtually all political factions to promote their own views and aims.

There is no doubt that the Soviet Union exploited American racial problems for its own propaganda purposes, particularly among former colonies of western industrial nations. However, those individuals who supported racial justice appeared, at times, to be more concerned with the Soviet Union's exploitation of racial segregation for its own purposes than with the hardships it caused blacks. This tendency is a clear indication of the extent to which the cold war shaped American racial and political thought. Many blacks and whites who favored eliminating segregation argued foremost that it was a political handicap in the struggle with the Soviet Union for the allegiance of people in the underdeveloped countries. In effect, these cold war integrationists exploited the race issue for their own purposes. Professor Rayford W. Logan, a prominent black educator, expressed the views of these individuals when he stated:

The Supreme Court decision has been the most dramatic and effective reply to Soviet criticism of the shortcomings of democracy in the United States . . . the United States can not let down its guard in the ideological struggle. Soviet propaganda would have a field day if, after the great exaltation following the decision, implementation should be stymied.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>46</sup>Rayford W. Logan, "The Realities and Ethics of Desegregation," The Antioch Review, Winter, 1954-55, p. 404.



Observers of southern politics and race relations in the 1950's and early 60's have noted the parallels between resistance to racial change in the South and anti-communism in the North. Members of the southern intelligentsia, in particular, emphasized the similarity between the two struggles. In 1960, William Workman, a conservative South Carolina writer, conceding that teachers and educators often were afraid to express opinions contrary to those prevailing in their communities, attempted to explain this situation by stating:

What Communism has been to the rest of the nation, so integration is to the South--something so undesirable, so foreign to the domestic way of life, so fraught with danger . . . that it is fought on every front . . . without attempting to establish any positive link between Communism and integration, there is nevertheless an analogous connection in that Southerners consider integration as much a threat to their way of life as Americans generally think of Communism as a threat to the American way of life.<sup>47</sup>

The obvious difficulty with this analogy is that it could be construed to mean that whites in the South were not overly concerned about the issue of domestic communism. There is little doubt that they were more anti-communist than people in any other section of the country.<sup>48</sup>

The anti-communist consensus, as it existed in the Deep South, had a racial element it generally lacked elsewhere.

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<sup>47</sup>William D. Workman, The Case for the South (New York: Davin-Adair Company, 1960), pp. 245-46.

<sup>48</sup>Samuel A. Stouffer, Communism, Conformity, and Civil Liberties (Garden City: Doubleday and Company, 1955), p. III.



It was used by fundamentalist segregationists, who could never be certain where the next inroads in the caste system would occur, to broaden the appeal and increase the legitimacy of their obstructionist efforts. As a result, they gained the support of many educated middle-class whites who otherwise might have questioned the methods, if not the goals, of the resistance groups. Thus, the strength of the resistance movement resulted not only from the fact that it was led by members of the white political elite but from the fact that it appealed to the nationalist sentiments of most lower and middle class whites.

The failure of leadership was most obvious at the federal level where the government still sporadically promoted the anti-communist consensus and made little effort to refute the assertions of the segregationists. Southern officials, some of whom originated these charges, continued to encourage and exploit them for their own political advantage through the mid 1960's. These political leaders failed to promote peaceful racial integration because that simply was not one of their goals. Instead, they employed inflammatory rhetoric and quasi-legal maneuvers to delay change. These tactics, combined with a popular ideology that often precluded dissent, had the effect of intimidating teachers and administrators. More important, these methods of resistance reinforced the political power of the white elite as blacks became increasingly outspoken in demanding the elimination of racially segregated school systems.



## CHAPTER VII

### LABOR MOVEMENT THWARTED BY SEGREGATIONISTS

Although a few individual clergymen and educators had spoken out against segregation prior to the Brown decision in 1954, neither the church nor southern educational institutions had challenged the region's caste system. However, organized labor had a relatively long history of resistance to segregation laws and to the rigid class lines the laws helped maintain. Because most labor cause organizations were headquartered outside the South, labor leaders came under attack earlier and were subject to more intense vilification than were the few clergymen and educators who expressed concerns about segregation. Also, southern political and business leaders no doubt understood that labor constituted more of an immediate potential threat to the status quo than did individuals associated with religious or educational institutions. Finally, some unions actually included communists and other assorted radicals among their membership. For these reasons, the labor movement, early in the twentieth century, was vulnerable to charges that it contained subversive elements and many whites viewed it as the single most serious threat to their social system.



Early anti-union activity and propaganda, particularly that associated with the red scare of 1918-1919, laid the groundwork for similar campaigns at mid-century. In both periods, the South's business and political leaders portrayed organized labor as determined to destroy their economic and political hegemony. Union organizing had aroused much hostility in the early 1900's when the IWW conducted a drive to recruit black and white workers in the South. Segregation laws and other forms of resistance proved sufficient to prevent all but the most marginal and temporary gains by the Wobblies. Moreover, the IWW demonstrated a serious weakness in its failure to enlist a significant number of black members.<sup>1</sup> By 1917, with many of its leaders in jail, the union had ceased to function effectively and was spending much of its energies and income on legal defense.<sup>2</sup> Yet hostility towards the Wobblies and radicals in general reached new levels of intensity as the red scare took hold at the close of World War I. One editorial in a major southern newspaper reflected a prevalent attitude when it stated in 1919:

The I.W.W. and all their allies of anarchism and radical socialism are public enemies and outlaws. They should be hunted down. . . . If martial law

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<sup>1</sup>Wilson Record, The Negro and the Communist Party (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1951), pp. 10-12.

<sup>2</sup>John S. Gambs, The Decline of the I.W.W. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1932), p. 31.



is needed in regions infested by the Reds, then for martial law we should provide.<sup>3</sup>

The reason for this intense animosity was not simply strong anti-unionist or anti-socialist sentiment per se. Rather, it resulted primarily from the widely-held view that radicals and union organizers were committed to instigating an open rebellion among southern blacks.<sup>4</sup> The Congress played a vital role in contributing to this view, just as it later did in shaping the cold war sentiments of the 1940's. As a result of the reports of a Senate investigating subcommittee, many influential southerners directly associated the social and racial tensions in their society with the new Soviet government.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, they believed that if the situation were allowed to develop unchecked, the social upheaval and unbridled chaos they thought were prevalent in the Soviet Union would occur in the South.

Except for the marginal IWW activities, little union organizing or political agitation of any kind occurred until the late 1920's when a few communist organizers went into the South.<sup>6</sup> Nonetheless, conspiracy theories attained

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<sup>3</sup> New Orleans Times Picayune, November 13, 1919.

<sup>4</sup> For one expression of this view see quote by South Carolina Representative James F. Byrnes on page 9.

<sup>5</sup> For a detailed account of the subcommittee's findings see Frederick Lewis Schuman, American Policy Towards Russia Since 1917 (New York: International Publishers, 1928), p. 124.

<sup>6</sup> See Wilson Record, op. cit., p. 37. Record writes: It is surprising that the Communists with their emphasis on the Negro question, made no great effort to organize Negro tenants and sharecroppers in the



widespread acceptance among southern whites in the early 1920's. Business and political leaders by equating unionism with racial change and communism insured the continued division of working class whites and blacks. Acts of violence aimed at intimidating and controlling blacks assumed alarming proportions. However, the more perceptive members of the white elite opposed overt vigilante acts against blacks because they realized that these methods could result in federal intervention which, in itself, would pose a potential threat to the caste system. Thus, the Atlanta Constitution, in a reference to widespread racial violence, warned its readers that "if they do not stamp mob law out of existence in this and other states, the United States government will."<sup>7</sup>

The red scare had important racial and political implications for the people of the South--implications that would play a role in the region's response to the cold war some thirty years later. Most whites in other sections of the country generally viewed radicals as posing a danger primarily to the democratic aspects of American society and its capitalist economic structure. They expressed limited concern about the possible influence of radical thought on

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South, who even after World War I still represented the bulk of the Negro population and labor force. But until 1928 Communist activity below the Mason-Dixon line was practically nil.

<sup>7</sup> Quoted in Literary Digest, August 10, 1918, p. 13.



blacks, even those that now were moving into northern cities. However, whites in the Deep South differed in that they believed that the most immediate danger was a racial one. To them, radicals constituted a political and economic threat because they agitated among blacks and helped them articulate their grievances and demands for change.

Reflected in the rapid growth of the Ku Klux Klan, white supremacy emerged from the years of the red scare firmly entrenched in the South. At this time, as later, it was a doctrine that encompassed considerably more than the idea of racial superiority. It included, at least for white southerners, a hostility towards labor organizers and radicals in general, who were regarded as dangerous agents of racial and social unrest.<sup>8</sup> Thus, white southerners exhibited a large degree of unity in opposing the spread of radical political and economic ideas among black people. This unity manifested itself in a variety of ways that were common both during the 1930's and at the height of the civil rights movement in the 1950's and 1960's. Economic and political coercion were generally more acceptable to the elite than overt violence and ultimately served the same ends. Nevertheless, violence flourished in such an atmosphere and played a critical role in repressing the aspirations of blacks throughout this period.

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<sup>8</sup> For an important early study of the racial policies of organized labor see Herbert Northrup's, Organized Labor and the Negro (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1944).



The American Federation of Labor and the Communist party encountered intense opposition when they sent representatives into the South in the late 1920's to organize textile workers. Not unexpectedly, the business and political leaders exploited the situation in order to further associate the union movement with the Communist party, although the two organizing campaigns were separate and distinct.<sup>9</sup> The Gastonia, North Carolina mill strike of 1929 was led by communists who had formed the National Textile Workers Union. Reprisals against the strikers were justified by the media and other opinion leaders on the grounds that the strike was communist-inspired and directed. But the United Textile Workers Association (UTWA), a non-communist union, encountered the same charges when a wildcat strike occurred at a plant in Marion, North Carolina. B. M. Hunt, the company president, stated: "I cannot see that there is any difference between this so-called conservative union and the Communist union at Gastonia."<sup>10</sup> Although both the Gastonia and Marion strikes failed, the UTWA continued its organizing effort in the South. Thousands of workers struck in the fall of 1934. The AFL-CIO estimated that approximately 145,000 workers went on strike in Georgia,

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<sup>9</sup> See Manufacturers Record, August 15, 1929, pp. 53-54.

<sup>10</sup> Quoted in The Southern Labor Story, Industrial Union Department, AFL-CIO, Southern Regional Council files, Atlanta, Georgia, undated, p. 26.



South Carolina, and Alabama.<sup>11</sup> This effort indicated that white workers were growing more receptive to union organizing. However, it too ended in failure primarily because influential southerners remained extremely hostile to organized labor.<sup>12</sup> There is little doubt that these influential southerners created and sustained an atmosphere of suspicion and animosity that union forces simply could not overcome.

President Roosevelt's order creating the Fair Employment Practices Committee was an important but largely symbolic victory for blacks. More than any other individual, A. Philip Randolph was responsible for Roosevelt's decision to expand employment opportunities. In 1941, Randolph and Milton Webster of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters toured the South promoting the idea of a march on Washington as a means of pressuring the federal government to take measures that would guarantee blacks equal employment opportunities.<sup>13</sup> Randolph's idea gained immediate acceptance among black organizations including the NAACP and the Urban League. Southern political leaders reacted strongly--particularly those in Congress, who claimed that the President was being coerced by irresponsible radicals bent on social disruption.

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>12</sup>For an example of the business community's view of labor conspiracy in the South see "Vigorous Efforts Being Made Against Progress of the South," Manufacturer's Record, August 15, 1929, pp. 53-54.

<sup>13</sup>"The Pullman Porters March on Washington," The New Leader, July 11, 1955, pp. 18-19.



The FEPC hearings on racial discrimination in the South further threatened the elite who made the commission an object of their wrath throughout the war.<sup>14</sup> The FEPC, in fact, did very little to improve the lot of black Americans. Largely because southern congressmen refused to approve funding, the commission was discontinued in 1946; from that year until 1951, federal action against discrimination was limited to employment within the government itself. Nonetheless, Randolph's successful tactic established him and his union as an influential force with labor and government. Correspondingly, in the South he was considered to be a militant union official who was subversive and dangerous. There his ties to groups such as the Southern Conference for Human Welfare and the Southern Negro Youth Congress, both cited by HUAC as communist-front organizations, made him a constant target of segregationist leadership.

With the passage of the Wagner Act in 1935, labor for the first time had the federal government's official sanction to organize and bargain collectively. This fact, plus the Roosevelt administration's growing reliance on urban and ethnic political alliances, made southern political leaders increasingly suspicious and resentful of both labor and government.<sup>15</sup> Although the Wagner Act provided legal

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> For a detailed account of the rise of southern congressional opposition to the policies of the New Deal see James T. Patterson, Congressional Conservatism and the New Deal (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1967). See



sanction for organizing activities, it ironically had the effect of making organizing more difficult because it further solidified anti-union forces in the South. One astute observer of the southern political scene noted in 1943:

Since the Wagner Act made open union-busting illegal, race-baiting has become almost the chief weapon of the anti-labor storm troops. Certainly this is true in the South where the union man, himself torn by prejudice, is inclined to fall easy prey to the anti-Negro mouthings of demagogues like [Eugene] Talmadge and ["Pappy"] O'Daniel . . . and professional hate promoters like Vance Muse, who once described the nonexistent Eleanor Clubs as a "Red Radical scheme to organize Negro maids, cooks, and nurses in order to have a Communist informer in every Southern home."<sup>16</sup>

During this period the Dies committee, the forerunner of HUAC, made repeated efforts to associate the New Deal and the CIO with communist subversion.<sup>17</sup>

As anti-union activities increased, union racial practices became an important issue in the struggle between the AFL and the CIO. The CIO generally accepted blacks on an equal basis with whites and organized thousands of black workers in a variety of industries. It adopted policies that had direct appeal to black workers: for example, it contributed to black organizations, adopted resolutions demanding racial equality, used blacks as organizers, and

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also John Moore, "The Conservative Coalition in the United States Senate, 1942-1945," Journal of Southern History, 33 (August, 1967), 368-76.

<sup>16</sup>Victor H. Bernstein, "The Anti-labor Front," Antioch Review, 3 (1943), 337-38.

<sup>17</sup>See Goodman's The Committee, p. 161.



created a committee to abolish racial discrimination.<sup>18</sup>

Moreover, the CIO, by successfully exploiting the fact that racial discrimination was tolerated officially in the AFL, won the support of the NAACP and the National Urban League.

By the early 1940's black workers had begun to make significant progress as an organized element of the work force. As they moved in growing numbers into the ranks of organized labor, they deserted the Republican party and established a strong bloc of support for Roosevelt and the Democrats. Blacks formed an important part of the labor-government-ethnic alliance that emerged from the political and social changes growing out of the depression. That alliance threatened the southern caste system more than anything else prior to the Brown decision in 1954. Temporarily upstaged by World War II, the alliance regained political momentum in the mid 1940's and continued to exert pressure for changes in the racial status quo. Meanwhile southern liberals looked to the progressive racial practices of the CIO as a possible means of modifying rigid segregation barriers. As a general rule, CIO unions refused to permit segregated locals in the South. Will W. Alexander, director of the Commission on Interracial Cooperation, assessed these union policies as follows:

In the long run, it may turn out that the new attitude of labor towards Negro workers, as expressed

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<sup>18</sup>Ray Marshall, "Unions and the Negro Community," Industrial and Labor Relations Review, 17, No. 2 (January, 1964), 181.



by the C.I.O., will have more significance than the changes that have taken place in government employment patterns. The C.I.O. is, at the moment, the most promising force for correcting the inconsistencies in our racial patterns.<sup>19</sup>

By the end of World War II, the CIO had made notable progress in its efforts to organize workers in the South. Textile workers in several states, auto workers in Georgia, rubber workers in Alabama, and assorted others in the region had formed locals.<sup>20</sup> The United Mine Workers had succeeded in organizing southern coal miners before World War II and the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union had made some progress in establishing collective bargaining among sharecroppers.<sup>21</sup> Encouraged by these inroads, the CIO announced plans for a major southern organizing drive in 1946.<sup>22</sup>

Emphasizing that it now held an equalitarian position on race, the AFL also initiated a major organizing drive in the South in 1946. Capitalizing on southern fears, William Green and George Meany of the AFL made the communist issue a major part of their campaign to compete with the CIO for membership. Union President Green told AFL delegates to the 1946 southern planning conference in Asheville, North Carolina: "Neither reactionary employers nor Communists in the

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<sup>19</sup>Will W. Alexander, "Our Conflicting Racial Policies," Harpers, CXC, January, 1945, pp. 172-179.

<sup>20</sup>The Southern Labor Story, p. 30.

<sup>21</sup>Ray Marshall, "The Development of Organized Labor," Monthly Labor Review, March, 1968, p. 65.

<sup>22</sup>The New York Times, March 15, 1946.



C.I.O. can stop the campaign of the American Federation of Labor to enroll 1,000,000 unorganized southern workers in the next twelve months." He warned southern industrialists that they could either "grow and cooperate with us or fight for your life against communist forces."<sup>23</sup>

The CIO made no attempt to obscure the fact that it had social and political goals in the South. It supported the FEPC, the repeal of poll taxes, and the elimination of segregation laws.<sup>24</sup> For these reasons as much as because it attempted to organize southern workers, "Operation Dixie" met with violent opposition from corporation officials and from southern political leaders. One newspaper editor responded to the drive by warning white workers they would suffer economically if they united politically with blacks:

Were negroes admitted to [the cotton mills], management would have a new and immense supply of labor. In the South are millions of negroes who could spin and weave. If the white textile workers should combine with the C.I.O. in political action, they would thereby invite competition of negroes and consequent lowering of their wages.<sup>25</sup>

As a partial response to the organizing drives, southern conservatives in Congress joined republicans to override President Truman's veto of the Taft-Hartley Act in June, 1947. Although this act reaffirmed the federal government's

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<sup>23</sup>Quoted in F. Ray Marshall, Labor in the South (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), p. 247.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 263.

<sup>25</sup>Charleston News and Courier, April 18, 1947.



commitment to free collective bargaining, it placed a number of restrictions on union activities and, according to some union officials, seriously impaired unionization efforts in the South.<sup>26</sup> On the state level legislatures enacted laws banning the union shop, further hindering organizing efforts. Much of the political support these anti-union measures enjoyed resulted from the potential threat unions, particularly the CIO, posed to racial segregation. By 1954, all the Deep South states except Louisiana had enacted right-to-work laws.<sup>27</sup> An official of the Textile Workers' Union of America who was a knowledgeable observer of labor's efforts in the South stated:

[The right-to-work laws] have tended to give legal confirmation to anti-union attitudes. Equally important, they have tended to weaken union positions in the presently organized plants, particularly those employing high proportions of semi-skilled workers and having a locally controlled industrial relations policy.<sup>28</sup>

In addition to legal restrictions at the federal and state levels, the labor movement encountered a propaganda assault from Congress. Throughout 1947, the House Un-American Activities Committee, under the chairmanship of Georgia democrat John S. Wood, repeatedly charged that communists

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<sup>26</sup> Economic Justice (New Haven: National Religion and Labor Foundation, October, 1947), p. 1.

<sup>27</sup> The Southern Labor Story, pp. 25-26. The Louisiana law, enacted in 1956, applied only to agricultural workers and workers employed in the processing of certain agricultural products.

<sup>28</sup> Solomon Barkin, The Decline of the Labor Movement (New York: Fund for the Republic, 1962), p. 24.



had infiltrated, and in some instances taken control of, the American labor movement. Among those unions the committee specifically cited were the United Auto Workers; the Food, Tobacco, and Agricultural Workers; and the United Electrical Workers.<sup>29</sup> In what was described as a "warning," Wood's committee issued a statement in December, 1948, charging that twenty unions of the CIO had been dominated by communists. HUAC named thirteen leaders of CIO organizations as having been "followers of the Moscow line,"<sup>30</sup> The committee explained its widespread circulation of the report saying, "Communists know control of unions will provide a main key to take control of the country."<sup>31</sup> The charges made against these unions were another in a series of official indictments that affected public opinion in the South. Because the CIO had some communists among its members and because it worked openly to end segregation in its affiliates, the ruling elite, who benefitted most from racial segregation and the exploitation of non-union labor, could claim with a surface plausibility that the goals of organized labor were essentially the same as those of international communism. This often repeated assertion gained added legitimacy as a result of the anti-communist pronouncements of HUAC and other

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<sup>29</sup> Walter Goodman has concluded that the hearings revealed nothing new but may have been instrumental in the CIO's decision to expel its communist members. See Goodman, The Committee, p. 199.

<sup>30</sup> The New York Times, December 24, 1948.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.



government agencies.

Conservative cold warriors were joined by anti-communist liberals in mounting an ideological offensive in the late 1940's. With the formation of the Americans for Democratic Action in 1947, the left became strongly anti-communist.<sup>32</sup> One highly significant result of the acceptance of the cold war consensus by groups such as the ADA was that HUAC's demands for repression and purges met little effective opposition. Many on the left, who in more rational times might have denounced authoritarian tactics and defended civil liberties, accepted with few reservations the domestic political repression that accompanied the cold war.

Labor leaders were foremost among those Americans who accepted the cold war consensus and the political repression growing out of it. Liberal spokesmen within the labor movement even began to adopt anti-communism as the basis of their appeals for economic and social reform. They maintained that one of the best assurances against communist inroads was progressive social legislation. Moreover, union leadership yielded to political pressures and urged that the ranks be purged of radical members. In 1948, Philip Murray, president of the CIO denounced those he described as "left wingers" in the union. Murray's denunciation was a clear demand for full acceptance of the cold war policies of the

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<sup>32</sup> James V. Compton, Anti-Communism in American Life Since the Second World War (St. Charles: Forum Press, 1973), p. 5.



Truman administration. It was directed primarily at Donald Henderson, head of the Food, Tobacco, and Agricultural Workers, who had voiced objections to the Marshall Plan. Murray and Walter Reuther, head of the United Auto Workers, led the effort to expel from the CIO those members the leadership considered too leftist.<sup>33</sup>

As labor moved to purge its membership of dissident elements, the Truman administration vigorously promoted a policy of rigid ideological conformity. In the presidential election of 1948, high-ranking democrats exploited the communist issue against the progressives, setting a precedent that was enthusiastically emulated by racial opportunists in the Deep South.<sup>34</sup> As previously noted, a series of international events, including the Berlin blockade and a communist coup in Czechoslovakia, appeared to many to vindicate the hard line approach of the Truman Doctrine. At the same time Truman allowed prominent liberals in government to attack Henry Wallace's Progressive party for having been infiltrated by communists.<sup>35</sup> Democrats competed with republicans and liberals with conservatives in voicing their own

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<sup>33</sup> The New York Times, November 23, 1948.

<sup>34</sup> The presidential election of 1948 also reflected the growing influence of foreign policy on domestic politics. For a cogent assessment see Robert A. Divine, "The Cold War and the Election of 1948," The Journal of American History, LIX, no. 1 (June, 1972), 90-110.

<sup>35</sup> Divine, *op. cit.*, p. 93. Also see Harold Wallace, "The Campaign of 1948" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University, 1970).



loyalty and in denouncing those on the left who advocated anything less than a hard line in domestic policies and in relations with the Soviet Union. Truman himself, as Robert Divine and others have noted, denounced the third party effort by saying that he preferred defeat to "the political support of Henry Wallace and his communists."<sup>36</sup> Thus, the president and his administration in effect encouraged by example the practice of maligning the left. More importantly, the administration seemingly demonstrated an acceptance of the tired charges that a serious internal communist threat existed and, in so doing, added legitimacy to the more irresponsible tactics and accusations of HUAC, of Senator Joseph McCarthy, and of the White Citizens Councils.

By accepting the idea of a serious internal communist threat, some members of the Truman administration and officials of organized labor conceded to anti-union forces in the South an extremely effective political weapon. They seemed, in effect, to be saying that the charges of disloyalty lodged frequently against unions were true. For example, the Taft-Hartley Act required that all union officials sign a loyalty oath. Some labor members voiced opposition, but the majority accepted this provision of the act and worked closely with the federal government in purging suspected members of the rank and file. Few union members were

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<sup>36</sup>Quoted in Robert A. Divine, "The Cold War and the Election of 1948," p. 98.



willing to defend vigorously the civil liberties of their fellow members or of their leaders. In 1953, a statement issued by the Packinghouse Workers, a CIO affiliate, observed:

We are rapidly becoming a nation of cowed and frightened people--frightened and cowed not by any foreign power or enemy but by the McCarthys and Veldes. And we in the labor movement must confess that too often we have been counted not among the few with courage but among the many with fear. . . . And even when we spoke we rarely acted . . . we allowed leaders of our own local unions to be placed under attack by the UnAmerican Committee in 1952 while we offered no support.<sup>37</sup>

The growing power of the Soviet Union's military-political machine posed a potential danger to the people of the United States. But all too many Americans, including labor officials, failed to distinguish between the realities of Soviet power and the mythical notion of rampant domestic subversion. Moreover, domestic subversion, not Soviet power per se was cited as the justification for the suppression of civil liberties.

Although union leadership initially failed to criticize the government's demands for political conformity, it did so in the mid 1950's on the grounds that the methods employed were counterproductive and encouraged political exploitation. In an AFL-CIO publication entitled Security, Civil Liberties, and Unions authors Harry Fleischman, Joyce Lewis Kornbluh

<sup>37</sup> From "The Road Ahead" (Statement by Packinghouse Workers-C.I.O., 1953), The Nation, December 10, 1955, p. 502.



and Benjamin D. Segal assessed the political repression of the late 1940's and early 1950's as follows:

The security system, from the first, was plagued by political exploitation. Politicians, intent on capitalizing on publicity which would bill them as superpatriots, whipped the post war fear of communist expansion into a wave of hysteria. They exaggerated the menace of Communist infiltration out of all proportion to reality, picturing the American community as honeycombed with disloyalty and subversion. These campaigns were not only contrary to fact, they interfered seriously with our efforts to detect real disloyalty and to snare the agents of the Communist conspiracy.<sup>38</sup>

Following the merger of the AFL-CIO in 1955, the union stepped up its efforts against racial segregation. In 1956, labor spokesmen announced a \$10,000,000 drive to bring court tests of segregation, to support research on segregation in all aspects of southern life, and to influence public opinion in support of racial equity. Delegates from some southern locals even went so far as to urge union members to violate segregation laws in order to bring segregation practices to legal tests.<sup>39</sup> The response from the southern elite was predictable. One of the region's strongest defenders of the Citizens Council, columnist John Temple Graves, wrote:

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<sup>38</sup> Harry Fleischman, Joyce Lewis Kornbluh, and Benjamin D. Segal, "Security, Civil Liberties, and Unions" (New York: National Labor Service, 1956), p. 15.

<sup>39</sup> Atlanta Constitution, March 25, 1955. Not all elements of organized labor worked to promote progress in race relations; some actually worked to prevent it. As late as 1955, major AFL unions continued to exclude black members by what was called "tacit consent," The Nation, December 10, 1955, pp. 502-503.



A package deal that won't pack is integration and unionization--now planned for the South by the A.F.L.-C.I.O. It explodes and when head man George Meany sends back insultingly unopened a protest of 160 Birmingham Union members against his ignorant attack on their Citizen Councils, he invites the explosion.<sup>40</sup>

Organized labor, despite the fact that it had more members than ever, found its position vis-a-vis management relatively weakened. The Taft-Hartley Act and state anti-union laws were partly responsible for labor's predicament. But domestic politics linked to the cold war had altered significantly the way Americans regarded labor. The editor of The Nation assessed this change in attitude as follows:

Partly this turn may be ascribed to the securer position in which management now finds itself, . . . as by-product of the cold-war psychology. Many of management's former critics and large sections of the middle class have now turned against organized labor, which has been pictured as a threat to national security and the national welfare. . . . The Red smear has been an important anti-union weapon.<sup>41</sup>

Thus, many Americans in other sections of the country had come to regard labor with the same mistrust that existed among white segregationists in the Deep South.

No organization exploited labor's ties to the left more effectively than the White Citizens Council. Council spokesmen and publications attacked union leadership and even conducted a campaign to recruit union members. In 1956, the chairman of the AFL-CIO Committee on Civil Rights warned

<sup>40</sup>The Birmingham Post-Herald, March 26, 1956.

<sup>41</sup>The Nation, December 10, 1955, p. 492.



that the real aim of the "great recruiting effort among union members now being conducted by the White Citizens Councils in the South is seducing the union man into fighting his union." If successful, he said, "it would mean an end to unionism in the South."<sup>42</sup>

The Citizens Councils linked the resistance to school integration to its anti-union activities. This ploy was entirely consistent with resistance tactics employed in Congress. There southern democrats consistently opposed legislation in the House and Senate favored by labor organizations. Moreover, these Congressmen frequently charged that the AFL-CIO was infiltrated by communists and wanted to force school integration on the white people of the South. Immediately following the Brown decision in 1954, Walter Reuther, president of the CIO, issued a statement supporting the decision.<sup>43</sup> Thus, anti-union propaganda and activities, much of which was related to the decision declaring segregation in public schools illegal, increased as resistance to school integration hardened.

By 1956, the political leadership had assumed a defiant position of resistance to racial integration. Opposition to union advances was regarded as essential to the resistance effort. The AFL-CIO Executive Council charged that, "White Citizens Councils have sprung up as a new Ku Klux Klan in

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<sup>42</sup> Durham Labor Journal, May 17, 1956.

<sup>43</sup> Walter Reuther, statement issued on May 17, 1954, Southern Regional Council files, Atlanta, Ga.



the South to preserve racial segregation and fight labor unions."<sup>44</sup> A union report compared the growth of the Council to the rise of the Nazi movement in Germany.<sup>45</sup> That the attack on labor was a two-pronged effort led by the Council and southern congressmen is evidenced by the unions' response. While denouncing attempts by the Council to smear labor and undermine its influence, labor spokesmen also urged action against those southern political leaders who supported the Council. For example, in May, 1956, Reuther asked the Democratic party to expel Senator James Eastland and other hard-core segregationists.<sup>46</sup>

H. L. Mitchell, head of the National Agricultural Workers-AFL, also viewed the Council as a "new and more powerful type of Klan." He charged that the real purpose of the resistance movement was to maintain the region's traditional social and economic structures. He stated:

While this movement was ostensibly organized for the purpose of mobilizing public opinion to delay and if possible, prevent the enforcement of the United States Supreme Court decisions outlawing segregation in the schools and in other forms of public life, the real purpose behind this movement is to use the desegregation issue to stop economic and social progress in the South.<sup>47</sup>

Mitchell had organized the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union

<sup>44</sup> See The Citizens' Council, March, 1956, p. 1.

<sup>45</sup> Southern School News, March, 1956, p. 13.

<sup>46</sup> The New York Times, May 15, 1956.

<sup>47</sup> H. L. Mitchell, "Behind the White Citizens Councils: The Challenge to Labor in the South," Southern Regional Council files, Atlanta, Ga., November 1, 1956.



in the 1930's. He, perhaps more than any other observer of the Council, understood the purpose of its origins and its ties to the ruling elite. Pointing out that the Council was organized by anti-union elements, he added:

Taking the lead in all of these hate organizations is the new director of the recently formed southern confederation or pro-segregationists which was organized in New Orleans on October 23, 1955. The director of the coalition of White Citizens Councils known as "Federation of Constitutional Rights" is John U. Barr, a self-styled industrialist, who has been a spokesman for the manufacturers' association in the South, a leader in the Dixiecrat political party of 1948 and in all of the anti-labor organizations created in recent years. It is also reported that the "Right to Work Councils" formed in Louisiana in 1954 have become the basis for organization of the new White Citizens Councils.<sup>48</sup>

The extent to which segregationist politicians associated union activities with racial change and subversion is clearly revealed in their public pronouncements and voting records. They also devised repressive state statutes that served to impede the work of union organizers and civil rights groups. They engaged in other tactics for the purpose of undermining the legitimacy of individuals and institutions supporting integration. In 1957, for example, the Georgia legislature passed a resolution calling for the impeachment of six Supreme Court justices on the grounds that they had aided the communists by outlawing racial segregation. The resolution charged specifically that these justices, in their judicial decisions, had (1) protected the

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<sup>48</sup>Ibid.



constitutional rights of communists, (2) refused to deport communists, (3) usurped state sovereignty in the 1954 Brown decision, and (4) gave aid and comfort to Harry Bridges, a militant labor leader who had ties with the Communist party.<sup>49</sup> When combined with other methods of resistance, political assaults against the Court played an important role in promoting segregationist sentiment and maintaining the momentum of the resistance movement.

There is little doubt that resistance activities hindered the organizing efforts of the labor movement and protracted the civil rights struggle in the Deep South. The white leadership understood that picket lines, boycotts, marches, and other forms of organized protest could be used to fight segregation before these methods were actually employed by civil rights activists. They instinctively associated these tactics with communists, labor militants, and agitators for integration. As a result, public opinion was strongly united against protest methods, particularly those involving direct action. The cold war consensus contributed to this climate of hostility towards groups and individuals who exerted pressure for social change. It facilitated the development by anti-union and segregationist forces of a resistance to racial integration that was based, in part, on the knowledge that segregation was as effective in maintain-

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<sup>49</sup>The Citizens' Council, March, 1957, p. 1.



ing class barriers as it was in sustaining the color line  
between whites and blacks.



## CHAPTER VIII

### CIVIL RIGHTS GROUPS LABELLED SUBVERSIVE

White southerners opposed to racial change directed their strongest charges of subversion at those individuals most active in the movement to eliminate segregation. In effect, this meant that individual blacks and black organizations bore the brunt of segregationist charges. However, predominantly white liberal organizations also came under attack. Here again the segregationists were assisted by congressional committees, which, before the civil rights movement fully emerged, had established a precedent of linking organizations working to improve the plight of blacks with "international communism." In 1942, for example, Martin Dies who chaired HUAC said, "I deplore the fact that throughout the South today subversive elements are attempting to convince the negro that he should be placed on social equality with white people, that now is the time for him to assert his rights."<sup>1</sup> In the postwar period, southern democrats, aided by their conservative republican colleagues, embarked upon a campaign to discredit completely those civil rights organizations whose work was proving most effective. They included the Southern Conference for Human Welfare, its

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<sup>1</sup>Quoted in Goodman, The Committee, p. 484.



successor the Southern Conference Education Fund, and The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

The SCHW was organized in 1938 by whites concerned about the oppressive economic and social conditions under which the majority of blacks lived. Its members came from widely diverse backgrounds, but they held in common a determination to promote racial and economic changes in the region. Thomas A. Krueger has described the organization's enemies as "poverty, race prejudice, and Southern Bourbonism."<sup>2</sup> However, HUAC concluded that SCHW was a communist-front organization whose "professed interest in Southern welfare is simply an expedient for larger aims serving the Soviet Union and its subversive Communist party in the United States."<sup>3</sup> The committee members reached their conclusions largely by employing the familiar tactic of assuming guilt by association. Professor of Law Walter Gellhorn assessed HUAC's use of this technique against SCHW:

This device involves, first seeking to establish a tie, however tenuous, between an unpopular individual or organization and some person connected with the Southern Conference; second, ascribing to that person all the undesirable qualities of the

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<sup>2</sup>Krueger, And Promises to Keep, p. 180.

<sup>3</sup>U.S., Congress, House, House Committee on Un-American Activities Report on Southern Conference for Human Welfare, 80th Cong., 1st sess. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1947. Walter Goodman describes this report and others issued by the committee as being marred by "an unfastidious use of evidence, sloppy organization and writing, rampant emotionalism, and wild charges." See Walter Goodman, The Committee, p. 200.



individual or organization with whom he had been momentarily linked; and finally, attributing to the Southern Conference the qualities which have been acquired by infection, as it were, by those intermediate persons.<sup>4</sup>

Finally, Thomas A. Krueger has conclusively demonstrated that SCHW was a popular front organization which contained some communist members but was never dominated or controlled by them.<sup>5</sup>

The SCHW's demise came in 1948; its membership was split over Henry Wallace's presidential candidacy and under intense pressure from HUAC.<sup>6</sup> However, the organization's successor, the Southern Conference Education Fund, continued much of the work begun by SCHW. SCEF assumed as its primary role the implementation of an educational campaign against racial segregation.<sup>7</sup> In 1947, SCEF spokesmen denounced segregation in education and in health care and urged immediate steps to correct racial inequities. By 1948, when it established itself as an independent organization under the leadership of Aubrey Williams and James Dombrowski, SCEF's work to abolish racial segregation and the relative militancy of

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<sup>4</sup>Walter Gellhorn, "Report on a Report of the House Committee on Un-American Activities," Harvard Law Review, LX (October, 1947), 1217-18.

<sup>5</sup>Krueger, And Promises to Keep, pp. 167-91.

<sup>6</sup>Interview with Virginia Foster Durr, Wetumpka, Ala., December 6, 1974.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid. Also see Krueger, And Promises to Keep, pp. 167-91.



its leaders had made it a favorite target of fundamentalist segregationists.<sup>8</sup>

In 1950, SCEF organized a conference of southern educators who wanted to initiate action against segregation and discrimination in colleges and universities. Representatives from some 100 institutions passed a resolution urging the removal of all segregation laws in education. Participants stated that they favored regional cooperation of education programs but added that such a program under the control of southern governors and legislators "could only serve as a device to perpetuate segregation."<sup>9</sup> Because of SCEF's role, the Southern Governors' Regional Education Board, based in Atlanta, refused to participate in the conference and, in effect, destroyed its chance of success. The Board's position was supported by the Atlanta Constitution in an editorial which noted that Congress had declared SCHW (and by implication SCEF) to be a communist front organization.

Time will reveal the organization to have Communists influential in its policies. The meeting in Atlanta can have but one purpose--although the announced purpose will be that of democracy and human rights. The real purpose, we believe, is to stir up trouble, to agitate the race question, and to 'bait' the South.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> For a detailed statement of SCEF's goals, see the Southern Patriot VI, December, 1948.

<sup>9</sup> The New York Times, April 9, 1950.

<sup>10</sup> Atlanta Constitution, February 26, 1950. Also see March 15, and 16, 1950.



Thus, much of the criticism of SCEF was based on the fact that it had been a part of SCHW whose former members continued to be harassed long after the organization's dissolution.

In Georgia, the political elite's use of the technique of guilt by association was clearly demonstrated in 1953 when the state adopted a statute outlawing membership in "subversive" organizations. Active Voters, a group of progressive Georgians opposed to the measure, was denounced by members of the Georgia House and Senate. Senator Iris Blitch charged that members of Active Voters belonged to organizations named as communist fronts by HUAC. The senator from Homerville, Georgia, singled out J. P. Whitaker, a professor at Atlanta University, and W. C. Henson, a member of Active Voters, charging that both men had belonged to SCHW in the 1940's.<sup>11</sup> These assertions were made in an obvious political move to gain support for a strong anti-subversion bill then pending in the Georgia General Assembly. Supported by Governor Herman E. Talmadge, the bill passed the Senate and House unanimously, clearly indicating not only the strength of the anti-communist consensus in Georgia but also the success the state's political leadership experienced by linking anti-subversion measures to the growing

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<sup>11</sup> The Statesman, Hapeville, Ga., February 26, 1953. Also see the Atlanta Constitution, February 24 and 25, 1953.



influence of civil rights organizations.<sup>12</sup> It is of interest to note that the Atlanta Constitution opposed the legislation editorially but had the following to say about SCHW: "The Atlanta Constitution had a great deal to do with driving the remnants of (S.C.H.W.) out of existence. . . . We fought it because, in its dying years, the Commies had got control."<sup>13</sup>

The cold war consensus was probably as instrumental in breeding charges such as those directed at Whitaker and Henson as were the racial biases of the segregationists. Members of the elite used their public offices as forums for advancing their views among whites of different economic backgrounds. Most members of the lower classes accepted their assertions identifying agitation for racial change with communist subversion. They resisted integration vehemently; at times, some of them resorted to direct physical attack on blacks and on whites sympathetic to change. However, lower class whites were as dominated by the political elite as were the blacks. Influential members of the middle and upper classes, many of whom occupied positions of authority, organized and led the resistance movement by manipulat-

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<sup>12</sup>For a statement by Governor Herman E. Talmadge in support of the bill see The Statesman, Mapeville, Georgia, February 26, 1953. Eugene Talmadge served as associate editor of The Statesman from 1933 to 1946. Herman E. Talmadge was an associate editor in 1953 while he was serving as governor.

<sup>13</sup>See the Atlanta Constitution, February 25, 1953.



ing public opinion against those working for change and creating an atmosphere intolerant of dissent.

Lillian Smith, author and outspoken critic of racial segregation, observed that the small element of the white population that resorted to violence had the support of many members of the upper classes. Among these same individuals were to be found the most virulent anti-communists in the United States. She described them as follows:

Some of these men are bankers, doctors, lawyers, engineers, newspaper editors and publishers, a few are preachers; some are powerful industrial leaders. . . . They hold not only economic power but moral and civic power. . . . It is a quiet well-bred mob. Its members speak in cultivated voices, have courteous manners, some have university degrees, and a few wear Brooks Brothers suits. They are a mob, nevertheless. For they not only protect the rabble, and tolerate its violence, they think in the same primitive mode, they share the same irrational anxieties, they are just as lawless in their own quiet way, and they are dominated by the same 'holy idea' of white supremacy.<sup>14</sup>

Not white supremacy alone, but the combination of white supremacy and anti-communism dominated the political thought of white southerners during this period when the primary feature of American political thought as a whole was anti-communism.

The increasingly strident nature of anti-communism and the highly questionable methods of expressing it caused concern among some influential segments of American society.

For example, in 1953, the Ford Foundation allocated

<sup>14</sup> Lillian Smith, "No Easy Way, Now," The New Republic, 137, December 16, 1957, p. 12.



\$15,000,000 to the Fund for the Republic to study the impact of anti-communism on civil liberties in the following areas: academic freedom, due process and equal protection of the laws, protection of minority rights, censorship, boycotting and blacklisting by private groups, and guilt by association.

The director of the Fund said the major threat to civil liberties was communism and communist influence but added that there existed "grave danger to civil liberties in methods that may be used to meet the threat."<sup>15</sup> The announcement of the Fund's study came shortly after the House of Representatives concluded an investigation to determine what groups and individuals were receiving foundations' grants. The special committee reported that the foundations were making a "vital" contribution to the nation but that some of their grants had gone to communists or pro-communists.<sup>16</sup>

Members of the southern political elite preferred to emphasize the foundations' support of civil rights programs instead of the more substantial support given to hospitals and universities. They stressed what they described as the subversive nature of the foundations as well as the groups to which they contributed. Former Governor Talmadge was one of the severest critics of foundation activity in the South. In 1955, while preparing to run for the United States Senate, he stated that American businessmen were "subsidizing their

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<sup>15</sup> The New York Times, February 26, 1953.

<sup>16</sup> The Washington Post, July 20, 1953.



own doom" by permitting the "unopposed emergence of tax exempt foundations financed by the profits of business and industry and dominated by enemies of the American form of government and the free enterprise systems."<sup>17</sup> Talmadge charged specifically that the Ford Foundation supported the Southern Regional Council which was "working to destroy segregation," and that the Foundation had given a \$240,000 grant to the Fund for the Republic, which was "going around decorating known Communists."<sup>18</sup>

As a general rule, the attitude of influential whites towards the foundations depended on their attitudes towards racial change. This was most apparent in the response of the media to announcements of foundations' grants. The Atlanta Constitution, edited by Ralph McGill, pointed out how Georgians benefited from grants by the Ford Foundation to the state's colleges and hospitals. An editorial stated:

The foundation, which has been subjected to ignorant and unfounded attack by racist fanatics and the McCarthy fringe in politics, has been and is one of the most valuable philanthropic foundations in our history. . . .<sup>19</sup>

The Jackson Daily News took a different editorial view, however, stressing the fact that the Ford Foundation had recently given the NAACP \$50,000 to support legal efforts to achieve racial desegregation in the public schools. The

<sup>17</sup> Quoted in Jackson, Miss. State Times, November 10, 1955.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Atlanta Constitution, December 13, 1955.



paper accused the foundation of promoting "the Communist racial program" and of subsidizing communist leader Earl Browder.<sup>20</sup>

The Ford Foundation was the strongest financial supporter of the Southern Regional Council, a moderate civil rights organization founded in 1944. The SRC was regarded by the more active individuals in the civil rights movement as a cautious organization fully committed to a gradual approach to racial change. Lillian Smith declined to support the organization in its early years because its leadership refused to adopt an official position opposing racial segregation.<sup>21</sup> Nonetheless, segregationists frequently linked the SRC to SCEF and charged its supporters with promoting communist goals. In 1955, Georgia's Attorney General Eugene Cook stated:

The Southern Regional Council and the Southern Conference Education Fund are both dominated by individuals who . . . have long records of affinity for and participation in Communist, Communist-front, fellow-traveling, left-wing and subversive organizations and activities.<sup>22</sup>

In March of 1957, Manning Johnson, testifying before a Louisiana investigatory committee modeled on HUAC, charged that the Communist party organizers had helped form the SRC.<sup>23</sup> The American Legion publication, The Firing Line,

<sup>20</sup> Jackson Daily News, December 15, 1955.

<sup>21</sup> Krueger, pp. 121-22.

<sup>22</sup> Cook, "The Ugly Truth About the NAACP."

<sup>23</sup> The New York Times, March 9, 1957.



printed Johnson's charges in April, 1957. In the following issue, the Legion publication asserted that many of the supporters of the SCHW later joined the SRC. American Legion spokesmen made the familiar charge that SCHW was a front organization for the Communist party.<sup>24</sup> The Citizens Council echoed the charges and widely circulated the Legion articles to segregationist groups across the region.<sup>25</sup>

Leaders of the Southern Regional Council attempted to answer these assertions but did so in a singularly ineffective fashion. Their responses usually contained two basic elements. First, they questioned the intellectual abilities of those who made such charges and secondly they maintained that it was the segregationists who were really aiding the communists. In a refutation of the charges made by the American Legion, SRC Director Harold Fleming stated:

The tragedy is that these self-appointed experts on 'subversion' show no understanding whatever of the real Communist movements. It thrives on white supremacy and noisy defiance of desegregation rulings. . . . By contrast, there are no more effective anti-Communists than those Southerners who are working for orderly compliance with the law of the land. Ironically, these are the only people whom the segregationist vigilantes falsely label 'reds' and 'subversives.'<sup>26</sup>

There is no doubt that there was a great deal of ignorance about communism among those who blindly equated it with racial change. However, a similar blind acceptance of

<sup>24</sup> Firing Line, May, 1957.

<sup>25</sup> Citizens' Council, June, 1957.

<sup>26</sup> Dykeman and Stokely, The Progressive, July, 1959.



its supposedly monolithic structure and intentions prevailed among educated and progressive individuals such as Harold Fleming. These southern liberals accepted without question the basic tenets of the cold war consensus. They apparently believed that the communist infiltrators posed a serious internal threat to the people of the nation. But in their view, it was the fundamentalist segregationists who were indirectly aiding the enemy, and the racial moderates who were working to thwart it. Thus, the fears generated by the cold war acted as a diversionary force that obscured the real issue of equal rights for black citizens. As Harry Ashmore, editor of the Arkansas Gazette noted:

The South's besetting problem is not the accommodation of the rising aspiration of its negro people, difficult as that may be, but its inability to reduce the issue to rational terms.<sup>27</sup>

Southern moderates experienced as much difficulty in this regard as did the fundamentalist segregationists. They tended to be as critical of those agitating for immediate racial change as they were of those who resisted integration. Typically, they accused both groups of promoting communist aims and polarizing the people of the South. Sociologist Howard W. Odum observed in 1954:

Talmadge and his cohorts, on the one hand, and the N.A.A.C.P. extremists on the other, by openly fanning the fires of physical conflict must surely be playing into the Communist strategy of divide and

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<sup>27</sup> Harry S. Ashmore, "The Untold Story Behind Little Rock," Harper's Magazine, June 1958, p. 18.



conquer as well as strengthening the demagoguery of McCarthy in the South.<sup>28</sup>

Odum was a respected leader in the early effort to find an alternative to the South's caste system. However, by 1954 he, and many other moderate whites, had been reduced to the position of demonstrating more concern with the growing reaction against the civil rights movement than with promoting the movement itself. Thus, the real failure of progressive leadership on the race issue resulted less from the political elite, which was openly committed to racist policies, than from moderate individuals such as Odum. Writing in 1964, Ralph McGill evaluated the effects of the moderate position on the civil rights movement.

The ideology of moderation was mostly myth. . . . The self-styled moderate turned out to be one who stood on the sidelines wringing his hands and urging both parties in conflict to be calm. There is nowhere on record a single constructive plan or action proposed by so-called moderates.<sup>29</sup>

Individuals who supported what Ralph McGill called "the ideology of moderation" regarded those who demanded an immediate end to racial segregation with suspicion and mistrust. Hence, outspoken advocates of immediate change had to contend not only with the fundamentalist segregationists but also with the charges and accusations of those individuals who could support only gradual change.

<sup>28</sup> Quoted in The Crisis, June-July, 1954, p. 352.

<sup>29</sup> Ralph McGill, The South and the Southerner (Boston: Little Brown Co., 1964), p. 283.



In 1957, Carl and Anne Braden began work as field secretaries for the Southern Conference Education Fund. Their goal was to promote white support for and participation in the growing civil rights movement.<sup>30</sup> In 1958, a House Un-American Activities subcommittee held hearings in Atlanta with the alleged purpose of exposing communist infiltration in the South.<sup>31</sup> The subcommittee subpoenaed Carl Braden to testify because as Richard Arens, committee staff director, later stated: "It was our information that Mr. Braden was a member of the Communist Party. That he was going over the Southland . . . doing Communist work."<sup>32</sup> Refusing to testify before the subcommittee, Braden was charged with contempt of Congress and sentenced to a year in federal prison. During his trial, he accused the subcommittee of using its position to harass individuals working to abolish segregation. He pointed out that of the six counts of an indictment against him only one related to the question of possible communist affiliation; the others dealt with his activities promoting racial integration. Braden maintained that the Justice Department, by prosecuting him, was "harassing integrationists with its left hand while claiming to support

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<sup>30</sup> Interview with Carl and Ann Braden, February 7, 1975, Louisville, Ky.

<sup>31</sup> Hearing of the House Committee on Un-American Activities, "Communist Infiltration and Activities in the South," 85th Congress, July 29-31, 1958.

<sup>32</sup> Quoted in the American Journal, January 22, 1959.



integration with its right hand.<sup>33</sup>

Some 200 southern black leaders openly opposed the subcommittee's hearings in Atlanta. In a petition to the House of Representatives, they argued that the real purpose of the investigation was to smear the integration movement by labeling those working in it as subversives.

We are acutely aware of the fact that there is at the present time a shocking amount of un-American activity in our Southern states. To cite only a few examples, there are bombings of the homes, schools, and houses of worship . . . ; the continued refusal of boards of registrars in many Southern communities to allow negroes to register and vote; and the activities of White Citizens Council's encouraging open defiance of the United States Supreme Court.

However, there is nothing in the record of the House Committee on Un-American Activities to indicate that if it comes South, it will investigate these things. On the contrary, all of its activities in recent years suggest that it is much more interested in harassing and labeling as 'subversive' any citizen who is inclined to be liberal or an independent thinker. . . .

We therefore urge you to use your influence to see that the House Committee on Un-American Activities stays out of the South--unless it can be persuaded to come to our region to help defend us against those subversives who oppose our Supreme Court, our Federal policy of civil rights for all, and our American ideals of equality and brotherhood.<sup>34</sup>

Martin Luther King, Jr., the most influential leader of the civil rights movement, regarded the committee's activities as a serious obstacle to the attainment of racial justice. He articulated a clear understanding of the ways in

<sup>33</sup> Quoted in The Chattanooga Times, January 21, 1959.

<sup>34</sup> Quoted in Charlotte Pomerantz, A Quarter Century of Un-Americana (New York: Marzani and Munsell, 1953), p. 83.



which anti-communism was used as a means of discrediting his work. Significantly, he considered the conviction of Carl Braden as another indication that the committee was resorting to the smear tactics of Joseph McCarthy to stop the integration movement. Warning that the communist issue was a pretext, King stated:

We see the rise of McCarthyism in the South again because all other weapons have failed. . . . Mr. Braden was called before the Committee simply for his integration activities. . . . If the Un-American Activities Committee is to have the power to subpoena everyone they will misuse the power to stand in the way of integration.<sup>35</sup>

King's view of the real purpose of the committee's investigation was supported by the minority dissent when the Supreme Court voted five to four to uphold Braden's conviction. Justice Hugo Black argued:

This is a decision which may well strip the negro of the aid of many of the white people who have been willing to speak up in his behalf.

If the Un-American Activities Committee is to have the power to interrogate everyone who is called a Communist, there is one thing certain beyond the peradventure of a doubt--no legislative committee, state or federal, will have any trouble finding cause to subpoena all persons anywhere who take a public stand for or against segregation.<sup>36</sup>

Some House members understood that the committee's real effectiveness did not lie in exposing communist subversion but, rather, in obstructing racial justice in the South. In 1961, Representative James Roosevelt stated in a letter to

<sup>35</sup> Quoted in The Southern Patriot, June, 1961, p. 4.

<sup>36</sup> Quoted in The Southern Patriot, April, 1961, p. 4.



the New York Civil Liberties Union:

I am thoroughly convinced that the lion's share of the blame for the fact that so few have dared to say these things [against segregation] in the South must be placed at the door of the House Un-American Activities Committee and its various imitators in the states.

The committees . . . have helped to create such a general atmosphere of fear that all social reformers--including advocates of racial justice--tend to be frightened into silence.

When the committees succeed in equating social reform with Bolshevism, it is to be expected that some people will confuse the 14th amendment with the Communist manifesto. To avoid being called Reds, they will be sure not to talk like integrationists.<sup>37</sup>

The Southern Conference Education Fund, more than any other civil rights group, publicized the link between the Senate and House investigations of subversion and the resistance movement in the South. In 1960, SCEF's publication The Southern Patriot and the York, Pennsylvania Gazette and Daily, revealed that Richard Arens, staff director of the committee, served as a paid consultant to Wycliffe Draper, a wealthy New Yorker who made large research grants for studies designed to demonstrate that blacks are genetically inferior to whites. According to David Wesley, editor of the Gazette and Daily, Draper established two advisory committees for the purpose of helping distribute his grants. Representative Francis Walter, chairman of the House committee, served as a member of one of Draper's advisory committees; Senator James Eastland, chairman of the Senate subcom-

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.



mittee, served as a member of the other.<sup>38</sup> The disclosure of the link between the congressional committees and Draper's racist propaganda campaigns resulted in SCFF releasing the following editorial statement:

For the past fifteen years, the organizations and people who have tried to arouse the white South to meet the challenge of integration squarely have been under attack by investigating committees and other agencies which have used a phoney communist issue to cloak their real aim of preserving segregation. Many such people and organizations have been destroyed; some have been driven from the Southern states. . . . an atmosphere of fear has been created in which many potential integrationists have been afraid of each other, and afraid of action. . . . attacks on liberal white Southerners were inevitable under any circumstances. But they would never have been as effective if they had been only a localized phenomenon. It was the national force of McCarthyism that gave them their lethal power.<sup>39</sup>

No organization working in the area of civil rights took more precautions to avoid charges of communism than did the NAACP.<sup>40</sup> Roy Wilkins and others feared that if the NAACP were successfully labeled as a communist or communist-front organization potential members would be frightened away and the organization discredited.<sup>41</sup> For these reasons, they took particular measures to keep communists out of the

<sup>38</sup> See The Southern Patriot, June, 1960, pp. 1-2.

<sup>39</sup> Editorial, The Southern Patriot, June, 1961, p. 4.

<sup>40</sup> When communist leader Claud Lightfoot stated that the communist party would inject itself in the civil rights struggle in the South, Roy Wilkins rejected his offer to co-ly stating: "The National policy of the NAACP is not to operate with any communist front or left wing groups." See The New York Times, February 22, 1956.

<sup>41</sup> Wilson Record, Race and Radicalism (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1964), p. 135.



NAACP and to ensure that charges against it did not go unanswered. Although the House committee stopped short of calling the NAACP a communist organization, it did cite a number of the organization's leaders as supporters of communist-front groups.<sup>42</sup> State investigative committees used this information in addition to testimony of witnesses to convince whites that the organization was subversive. As Wilson Record observed:

Such investigations, widely publicized, were among the responses of the white South's officialdom to the school segregation decisions. They were conceived as one means of discrediting, and in some cases 'outlawing' the organization chiefly responsible for the Supreme Court rulings and totally dedicated to enforcing them.<sup>43</sup>

As previously stated, one of the most effective and virulent attacks on the NAACP came from Georgia's Attorney General Eugene Cook. In his 1955 speech to the Georgia Peace Officers Association, Cook, acknowledging his debt to the House committee and to Senator Eastland for information they provided him, maintained that the NAACP was controlled by subversives from the start. He listed a number of individuals including W. E. B. DuBois, Roy Wilkins, Thurgood Marshall, and others who had been cited by the House committee as "having records of Un-American activities."<sup>44</sup> The speech was widely circulated by the Citizens Council and

<sup>42</sup> See Goodman, The Committee, p. 374.

<sup>43</sup> Record, Race and Radicalism, pp. 212-13.

<sup>44</sup> Cook, "The Ugly Truth About the NAACP."



had an immediate impact on race relations in the region. segregationists frequently cited it as irrefutable evidence of the subversive nature of the NAACP. By the end of 1955, Hodding Carter, a Mississippi newspaper editor, observed that in the emotional views of many whites the NAACP was "the organization which comes out ahead of the Communist party as the fountainhead of all evil and woe."<sup>45</sup>

However, the best assessment of how whites regarded the NAACP came not from a southern liberal but from William D. Workman, a segregationist who actively supported the resistance movement. In 1960, he wrote in his book The Case for the South:

The N.A.A.C.P. has come to represent in the eyes of countless Southerners, a distinct threat to the very fundamentals of American constitutional government and an instrumentality of the Communist conspiracy. The injection of this latter element into the situation . . . reflects both a willingness to ascribe the basest of motives to an agency which is regarded as an implacable foe of the South, and a tendency to cross identify Communism and integration, not entirely without reason. Through the years, dozens of persons--white and black--who have played leading roles in N.A.A.C.P. affairs have also performed services for other organizations designated by Congressional and government agencies as Communist or Communist-front. . . . Throughout the entire region, governors, attorneys general, and other public and private spokesmen of substance [emphasized] added in the pro-segregation ranks have exploited every discernible connection between the N.A.A.C.P. and Communism. . . . the integrationist goals of the N.A.A.C.P. and the Communist Party have been so nearly identical that the Southerner feels fully

<sup>45</sup>Hodding Carter, "Racial Crisis in the Deep South," Saturday Evening Post, December 17, 1955.



justified in concluding that 'things equal to the same thing are equal to each other.'<sup>46</sup>

Workman and other defenders of segregation understood that the NAACP through its legal victories was effectively undermining the caste system and that its integration efforts would not cease until all legal barriers had been removed. Prior to 1956, no other organization had been as instrumental in breaking down patterns of segregation as was the NAACP. For that reason, the energies of the southern political elite were often expended in maligning and discrediting the organization. Their harassment and propaganda campaigns were accompanied by legal procedures in the various states expressly designed to lessen the NAACP's influence among blacks.

In Alabama, the state attorney general sought to force the NAACP to turn over its membership lists to the state. This maneuver had the effect of barring organizing in the state as long as the legal proceedings were pending.<sup>47</sup> In Georgia, Attorney General Cook proposed an investigation of the NAACP which he described in a resolution as "an enemy of the South."<sup>48</sup> The state's revenue commissioner demanded that the organization's records, including membership lists,

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<sup>46</sup> William D. Workman, The Case for the South (New York: The Devine-Adair Company, 1960), p. 191.

<sup>47</sup> Alabama ex. rel. Patterson v. National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, 1 Race Relations Law Reporter 707 (1956).

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 956, 957 (1956).



be relinquished to assess tax liability.<sup>49</sup> In Louisiana, officials brought suit to force the NAACP out of the state because it had failed to comply with recently enacted legislation requiring the filing of membership lists. The subsequent legal proceedings interrupted the organizational work of the NAACP for several months.<sup>50</sup> There is little doubt that these legal maneuvers grew out of a concerted attempt to limit the freedom of speech and association of southern blacks working to end segregation.<sup>51</sup>

As the NAACP became increasingly involved in legal problems at the state level, the momentum of the civil rights movement shifted to other, more militant groups. The success of the Montgomery bus boycott, led by Martin Luther King, Jr., in 1956, convinced many blacks and some of their white allies that non-violent demonstrations and economic boycotts could achieve more immediate and lasting results than working through judicial channels.<sup>52</sup> The Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) was a direct

<sup>49</sup> Williams v. NAACP, 2 Race Relations Law Reporter 181 (1957). Also see The New York Times, December 15, 1956.

<sup>50</sup> Southern School News, February, 1957, p. 16, and June, 1957, p. 6.

<sup>51</sup> For a more detailed account of legal proceedings against the NAACP see Robert B. McKay's "The Repression of Civil Rights as an Aftermath of School Desegregation Cases," Harvard Law Journal, 4 (January, 1958), 9-34.

<sup>52</sup> Although the NAACP was not directly involved in the Montgomery bus boycott, many whites in Montgomery believed it was responsible for the situation there. See Robert S. Byrd's article in the St. Louis Post Dispatch, February 27, 1956.



outgrowth of the Montgomery bus boycott. In 1960, when the sit-ins and freedom rides began, SCLC embarked on a desegregation campaign in cooperation with the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), and the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). All three of these organizations advocated and employed direct action to break the segregation barriers. The strategy of resisting segregation practices by direct, non-violent confrontation with authorities alarmed southern whites considerably more than did the legal approach employed by the NAACP. It focused national and international attention on the states of the Deep South. As a result, by the early 1960's, the main targets of the political leadership were these more activist, predominantly black organizations.

Members of the southern white intelligentsia, some of whom had hesitated to attack the relatively conservative approach of the NAACP, joined the elite in its attempt to discredit and nullify the efforts of the more militant groups. For example, William Shipp, state news editor of the Atlanta Constitution proved highly effective in perpetuating the idea that communists were the root cause of racial demonstrations. Using HUAC information, Shipp attacked Miles Horton, director of the Highlander Folk School, for belonging to and associating with subversive organizations.<sup>53</sup> He charged that desegregation demonstrations in Georgia were

<sup>53</sup> The Atlanta Constitution, July 23, 1963.



supported by communist-dominated unions.<sup>54</sup> Finally, Shipp, who considered himself a liberal on the civil rights issue, asserted that Jack H. O'Dell, an administrative aid to Martin Luther King, Jr., was a member of the Communist party.<sup>55</sup> O'Dell had written for Freedomways, a journal that published articles by individuals who had ties to the Communist party; however, he denied that he was a communist.<sup>56</sup> Although it is conceivable that O'Dell had connections with the Communist party in 1963, there is nothing to indicate that the party had any significant influence on O'Dell or on the civil rights movement. On the contrary, most civil rights leaders were aware of the effectiveness of charges of communist influence and took specific precautions to minimize them. Still, fears of communist subversion persisted as did the opportunistic exploitation of those fears. As late as 1963, the Atlanta Constitution editorialized:

Any negro groups that carelessly permit the Communist related contingent to hitch its shoddy little trailer to their bandwagon is doing a dangerous disservice to the negro American's cause and should steer clear.<sup>57</sup>

Shipp's series of articles, and similar ones in other southern newspapers, provided segregationists with an invaluable source of propaganda material. Moreover, influen-

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., July 22, 1963.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., July 25, 1963.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., July 23, 1963.



tial members of the federal government were not immune from the effects of attempts such as Shipp's to discredit the movement. Attorney General Robert Kennedy requested a meeting with Martin Luther King, Jr., where he informed him that SCLC was being used by the Communist party.<sup>58</sup> Although the Kennedy administration encouraged voter education projects in the South, it failed to provide promised protection for activists directly involved in these projects.<sup>59</sup> As a result, leaders of the more militant groups grew increasingly disillusioned with the Kennedy administration. In 1963, James Farmer, national director of CORE, told his followers: "We've got to use the ballot box, the sit-in, and the boycott. We can't even look to the President of the United States to help us. We've got to help ourselves."<sup>60</sup> The political power of the southern democrats, no doubt, influenced the administration's policies. It is also possible that the Kennedys' exaggerated fears of internal communist influence also contributed to their ambiguous relationship to the movement.

As the civil rights movement assumed a more activist and militant nature, the nation experienced renewed fears

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<sup>58</sup> Interview with John Lewis, Atlanta, Georgia, May 12, 1975.

<sup>59</sup> See August Meier and Elliot Rudwick, CORE: A Study in the Civil Rights Movement (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), pp. 180-81.

<sup>60</sup> Quoted in the New York Times, May 20, 1963.



growing out of the cold war. The Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956, the alleged missile gap of the late 1950's, and U.S.-Soviet confrontations in Cuba and Berlin paralleled the political elite's efforts to resist change. These events and the political atmosphere resulting from them had a direct influence on the civil rights movement because they forced groups to invoke a form of self censorship that hampered their efforts but lessened their vulnerability to charges of disloyalty. CORE, for example, refused the assistance of the National Lawyers Guild because it had been identified as a communist front.<sup>61</sup> This decision came at a time when hundreds of civil rights demonstrators needed legal assistance.

SNCC was the only one of the four main activist organizations that openly refused to limit its activities and associates because of attitudes growing out of the cold war consensus. John Lewis who was national chairman of SNCC from 1963 to 1966 explained the organization's position as follows: "We took the position that a person's ideology did not matter. The important thing was that we were working for the same cause."<sup>62</sup> Because of this stance, SNCC was attacked by members of the national press and others outside

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<sup>61</sup>Meier and Rudwick, CORE, pp. 270-71.

<sup>62</sup>Interview with John Lewis, Atlanta, Georgia, May 12, 1975.



the South as well as by southern segregationists.<sup>63</sup> An allegation commonly made by the media was that SNCC was a communist dominated organization determined "to rule or ruin."<sup>64</sup> Julian Bond and John Lewis believe that these and similar charges hurt their efforts to organize blacks and gain white support for the movement. According to Lewis:

Local people in Mississippi were told by white elected officials not to have anything to do with the civil rights workers in the summer of 1964 because they were communist controlled.<sup>65</sup>

However, the civil rights movement had too much momentum and national support for the anti-communist/segregationist ideology to be completely effective. By the early 1960's, the struggle against segregation had the support of a significant number of blacks in the Deep South. They and their allies exerted intense political pressure on the Kennedy and Johnson administrations. In June of 1963, Kennedy stated that the demand by blacks for racial equality had increased to the point that "no city or state or legislative body can prudently choose to ignore them."<sup>66</sup> In August, some 250,000 people participated in a march on

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<sup>63</sup> See Newsweek, April 12, 1965; Evans and Novak's column in the Washington Post, April 9, 1965; and Joseph Alsop's column in Washington Post, April 15, 1964.

<sup>64</sup> Interview with Julian Bond, Atlanta, Georgia, June 25, 1975.

<sup>65</sup> Interview with John Lewis, Atlanta, Georgia, May 12, 1975.

<sup>66</sup> The New York Times, June 12, 1963.



Washington. The following year Congress passed a comprehensive civil rights bill, and in 1965 it approved the voting rights act.<sup>67</sup> Correspondingly, there were strong indications that the politics and ideology of massive resistance were beginning to lose their hold on whites. Nonetheless, segregationist fundamentalism had served effectively as a rationale for continued political repression and racial inequities. More importantly, this ideology had played an essential role in perpetuating the elite's political and economic hegemony--hegemony which largely depended on racial segregation for its continued existence.

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<sup>67</sup> For an assessment of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, see the St. Louis Post Dispatch, August 15, 1975.



## EPILOGUE

By 1964, the southern elite understood that the resistance movement it had organized and led was unable to prevent alterations in white-black relations. Membership in the Citizens Councils and other segregationist groups was gradually declining. Segregationist and anti-communist sentiments remained strong, but red-baiting had begun to lose some of its effectiveness as a means of maintaining opposition to racial integration. As weaknesses in local resistance efforts surfaced, the elite turned to national politics as a possible means of preserving its privileged economic and political status.

Former states rights presidential candidate Strom Thurmond, now Senator from South Carolina, announced that he was not only supporting Senator Barry Goldwater for president but was changing his party affiliation from Democrat to Republican. Although there was no mass exodus from the Democratic to the Republican party, many other white political leaders supported Goldwater. All five states of the Deep South cast a majority of votes for the Republican candidate. Much of this support stemmed from opposition to the civil rights policies of the Kennedy-Johnson administrations. Goldwater, who was one of the Senate's most outspoken anti-



communists, opposed passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. This added significantly to his political standing in the region, particularly in Mississippi and Alabama where segregationist sentiment was strongest. There Goldwater won by larger majorities than in the other states he carried. The election suggested that the segregationist consensus was now strongest in Mississippi and Alabama. Moreover, it clearly indicated that the Republican leadership would not hesitate to appeal to segregationist sentiment to gain votes in the South.

Senator Goldwater's politics closely resembled the elite's traditional states rights views. His defeat combined with the decline of the Citizens Councils left the hard-core segregationists weakened and increasingly isolated. Simultaneously, there were growing indications of a thaw in the cold war. In 1963, President Kennedy had called for peaceful co-existence between the United States and the Soviet Union in a speech at American University. Also, civil rights groups, particularly SNCC, exhibited a strong determination not to be intimidated by charges that they were under communist control or working for communist goals.

In 1964, President Lyndon Johnson articulated the nation's commitment to end legal segregation. His speech at Howard University was followed by the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. The Voting Rights Act provided federal examiners in those states that required



prospective voters to pass literacy tests and where less than 50 percent of eligible voters were registered. This act enabled large numbers of formerly disfranchised blacks to register and vote. In addition, it had a discernible influence on the region's racial politics because the black vote could now make the important difference in winning or losing an election.

Many hard-core segregationists, alarmed at black advances, turned to Alabama Governor George Wallace as their foremost racial and political spokesman. Throughout the late 1960's Wallace enjoyed unrivaled popularity in the Deep South. He demonstrated considerable skill in portraying communists as enemies of white southerners and as the malevolent force behind the region's racial conflicts. However, Wallace expanded the list of those he considered to be the white South's enemies to include federal bureaucrats, northern liberals, and southern moderates. This approach assured him a devoted following and, at the same time, diverted attention from his own deficiencies as governor of Alabama.

By 1965, much of the nation's, and the South's, attention turned to issues other than the struggle for racial justice. For example, the Johnson administration's "war on poverty" provided a new target for the enemies of racial equality and social change. More importantly, the war in Vietnam inspired an intense national debate that formally ended the cold war consensus. Irresponsible appeals to



segregationist sentiments and to anti-communist fears continued but did so in an altered national context.

In 1968, leaders of the Republican party devised "a southern strategy" to maintain the inroads into the South that had been made earlier. It consisted of restraining the powers of the federal government in the area of racial desegregation in exchange for white support of the Nixon-Agnew ticket. Following the Republican victory, Nixon appointees acted to slow the pace of school desegregation in the South. Moreover, Nixon sought conservative southern candidates for Supreme Court vacancies. In sum, Republican party leaders, with support from the President, attempted to form a permanent political base in the South by appealing to the racial sentiments of white segregationists. The strategy was less than wholly successful. Nonetheless, it retarded the pace of racial advance in the region and, once more, raised doubts in the minds of blacks and their white supporters about the federal government's commitment to racial justice.



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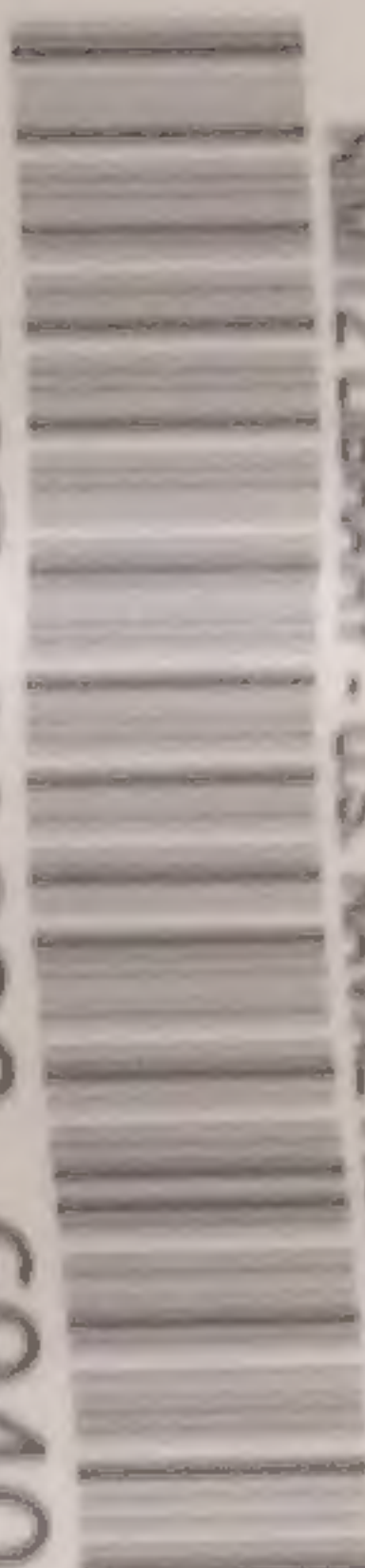
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